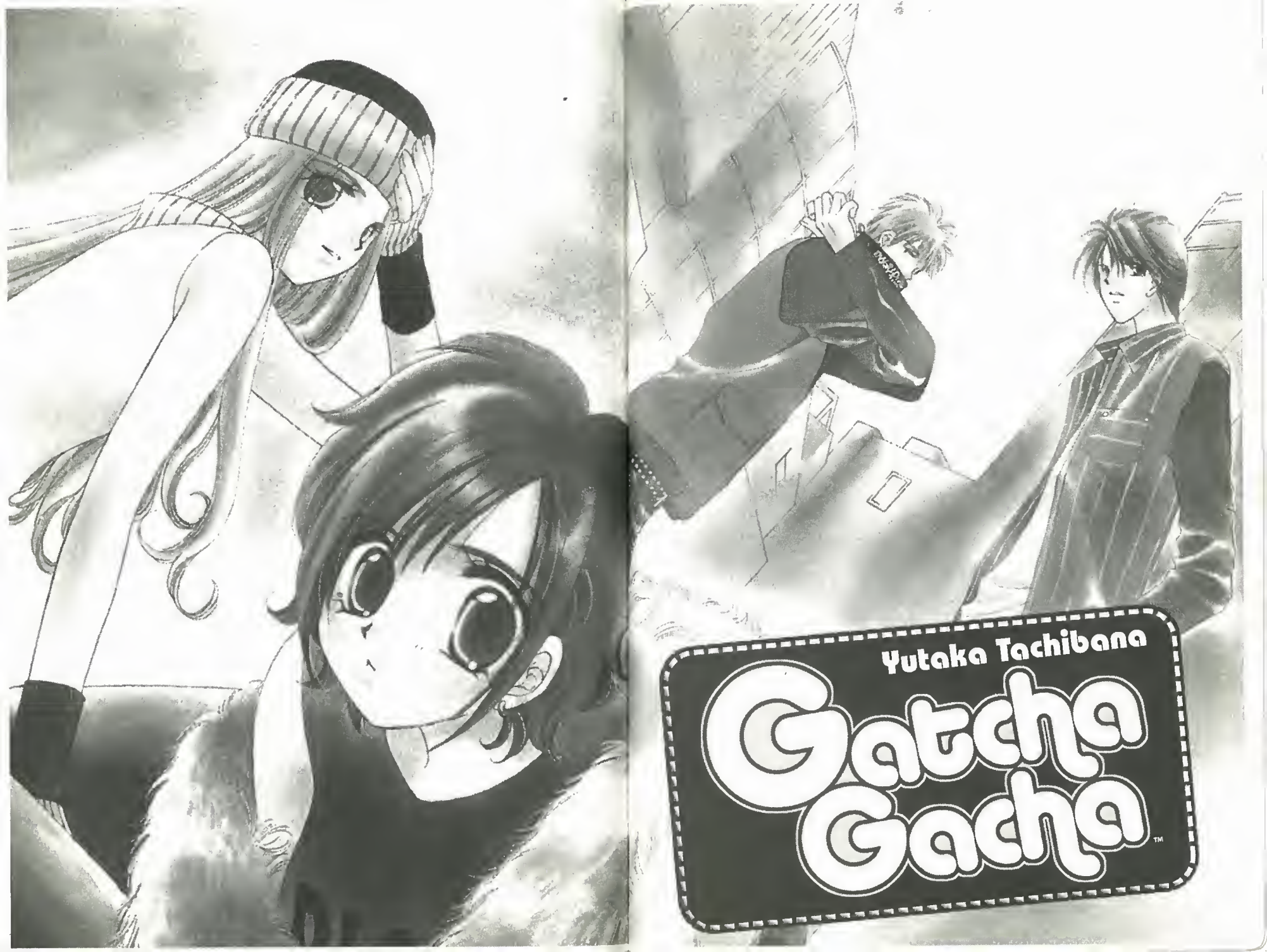
Gatchaman Gacha

3

Yutaka Tachibana

TOKYOPOP

The person dearest to my heart...


Yutaka Tachibana
Gatcha Gacha

I SPENT MY TIME AVOIDING ONE PERSON OR ANOTHER, TRYING MY HARDEST TO STAY INVISIBLE.
Ah-ha-ha-ha, you're too cute.
QUIT FUSSING AND RELAX. EVERYBODY'S A LITTLE NERVOUS THEIR FIRST TIME.
SENPAI!
PLEASE! STOP!
BACK THEN, I WAS ALWAYS AFRAID.
Hey...!
GET YOUR HANDS OFFA ME!
I LIVED HUDDLED IN THE SHADOWS...
...UNTIL SHADOWS FAILED ME.
This isn't okay!
I TOLD YOU TO RELAX.
I'LL BITE OFF MY OWN TONGUE AND BLEED TO DEATH!
SHOP
SENPAI...
No...!
I...
IF YOU DON'T LET GO OF ME RIGHT NOW...

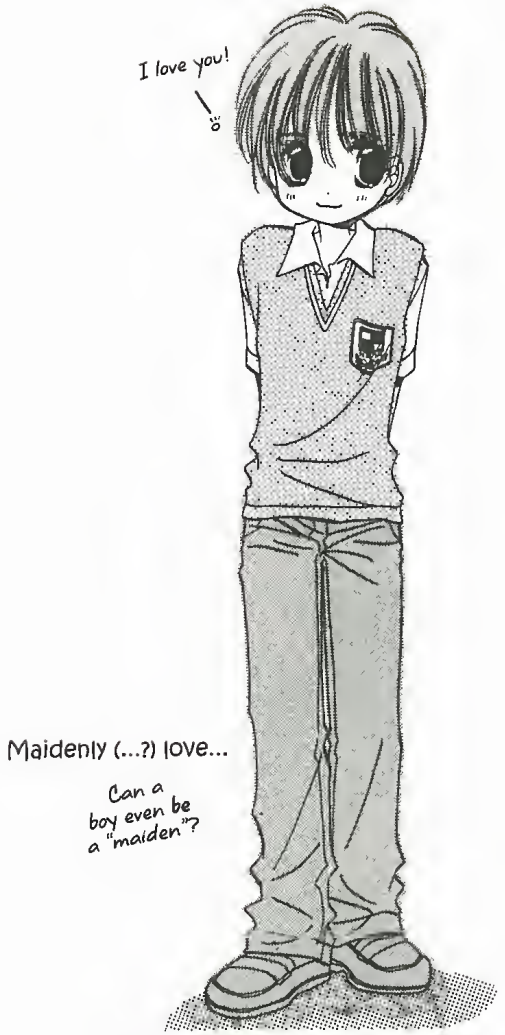
Hello, there!

Do you read books? I mean "real" books, not manga. I haven't read that many lately. (I know, I should go read one!) I keep telling myself I'll read them once I have a break from work, so I keep buying them...and now I have so many piles of books I haven't read, it's pathetic. But I will read them some day. I will. No, really!

If you have any suggestions for good books to read, I'd love to hear them.

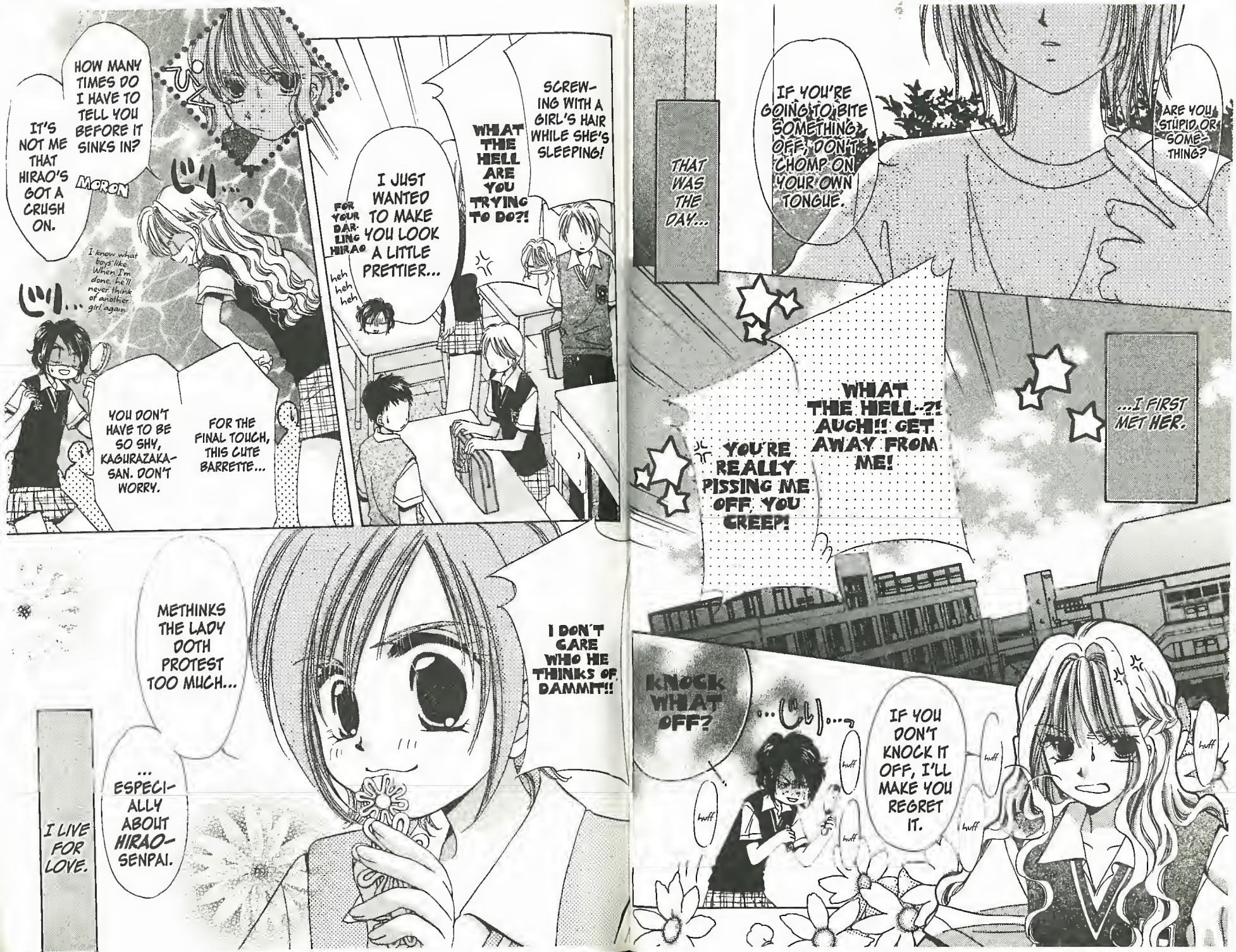
And if you tell me a few things about them to help me decide, I'd appreciate that, too!

Hmm. I think I'll dedicate this volume's Freetalks to the books that have inspired me. What a grand idea!



Maidenly (...?) love...

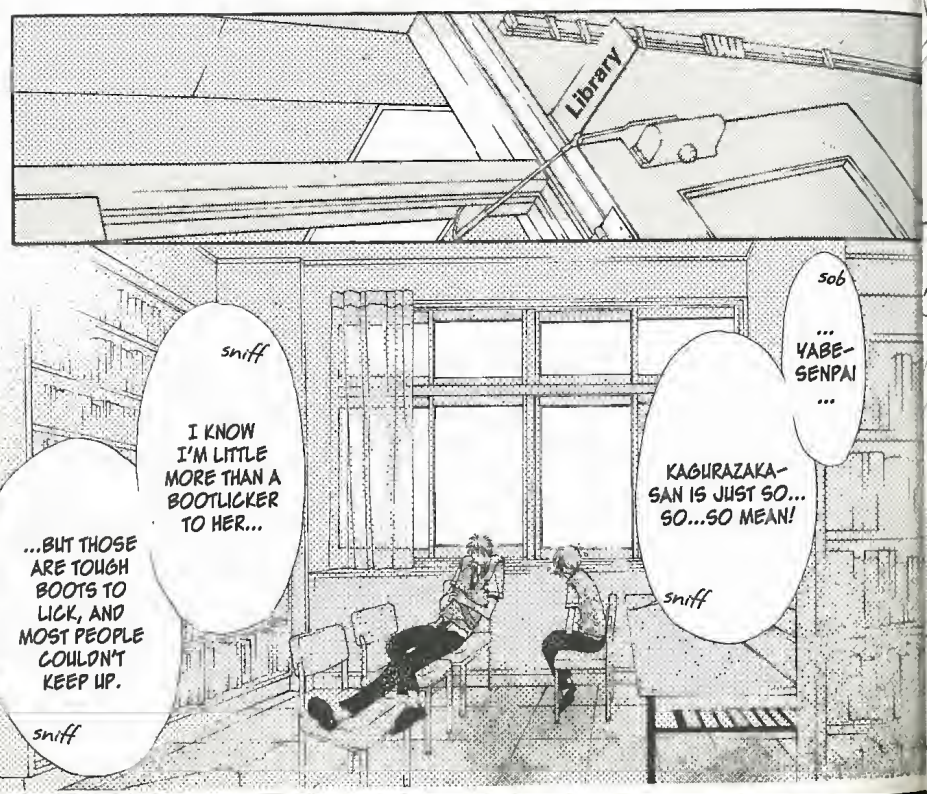
Can a boy even be a "maiden"?


HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU BEFORE IT SINKS IN?
IT'S NOT ME THAT HIRAO'S GOT A CRUSH ON.
MORON
I know what boys like. When I'm done, he'll never think of another girl again.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE SO SHY, KAGURAZAKA-SAN. DON'T WORRY.
FOR THE FINAL TOUCH, THIS CUTE BARRETTE...
I JUST WANTED TO MAKE YOU LOOK A LITTLE PRETTIER...
FOR YOUR DARLING HIRAO
heh heh heh
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?!
SCREWING WITH A GIRL'S HAIR WHILE SHE'S SLEEPING!
I LIVE FOR LOVE.
METHINKS THE LADY DOTH PROTEST TOO MUCH...
...ESPECIALLY ABOUT HIRAO-SENPAI.
I DON'T CARE WHO HE THINKS OF, DAMMIT!!
THAT WAS THE DAY...
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BITE SOMETHING OFF, DON'T CHOMP ON YOUR OWN TONGUE.
ARE YOU STUPID OR SOMETHING?
...I FIRST MET HER.
WHAT THE HELL--?! AUGH!! GET AWAY FROM ME!
YOU'RE REALLY PISSING ME OFF, YOU CREEP!
KNOCK WHAT OFF?
...(Lb)...
huff
IF YOU DON'T KNOCK IT OFF, I'LL MAKE YOU REGRET IT.

THAT'S IT! IF HE WON'T TELL HER, I WILL!!
FOR THE UMP-TEENTH TIME...
I WASN'T THE GIRL THAT HIRAO MEANT TO CONFESS TO!
YFFF!
MMPH!!
KAGURA-ZAKA.
C'MON, KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN! HIRAO-SENPAI ISN'T THAT STUPID. HE WOULDN'T MAKE A MISTAKE LIKE THAT.
Hee hee hee
HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR HAIR?
It looks smashing. Honest.
LISTEN, FOOL. HIRAO'S CRUSH ISN'T ON ME. IT'S--
NO! HE IS THAT STUPID!
Hirao-kun, the meeting...?
WHISPER
COULD YOU DO ME A SOLID AND KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT?
WHISPER
MPH MRPH (Bastard...!)
What did you just do?
HIRAO-SENPAI!

"...K-KAGURA-ZAKA..."
There actually should have been a question mark at the end of that.
"I... I LOVE..."
I WOULD NEVER HAVE GUESSED IF HIRAO-SENPAI HADN'T CONFESSED THE OTHER DAY...
Common Traits of Yuri's Ex-Boyfriends
- incurable flirts
- gambling addicts
- prone to violence
- junkies
I HAVE TONS OF EXPERIENCE WITH RELATIONSHIPS.
IT WOULD BE WRONG TO LET MY FRIEND STUMBLE THROUGH A NEW RELATIONSHIP ALL ALONE.
...AND, MOST OF ALL...
BUT NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT... THEY'RE BOTH REALLY SMART, AND SUPER ATHLETIC...
SO THAT'S YOUR GAME? SUCKING ME INTO THIS SO YOU CAN GRAB YABE?!
ONCE YOU AND HIRAO-SENPAI ARE TOGETHER, AND THEN WHEN YABE-SENPAI AND I ARE TOGETHER...
...WE CAN GO ON DOUBLE-DATES!
Yee! Can't hardly wait!
...HIRAO-SENPAI IS JUST A REALLY NICE GUY.
YOU'LL HAVE TO TRUST ME.
You think?

GRUMBLE GRUMBLE GRUMBLE
KAGU-RAZAKA-SAN, WAI--
I MEAN, SERIOUSLY.
SH-SHE'S JUST NOT LIKE THAT...
KAGURAZAKA-SAN WOULD NEVER STOOP TO...TO...DATING SOMEONE SO UPTIGHT!
NEVER EVER EVER!!
...HUH?
SEKINE-KUN?
YOU'RE JUST A LACKEY. NONE OF THIS IS ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS.
Jeez.
WHAT IS THIS, "ANNOY MOTOKO DAY"?
THE REAL HOPELESS CASE
HUH--?
SEE? YOU TWO WERE MADE FOR EACH OTHER!
Isn't it adorable? Whispering sweet nothings already.
I have to agree with her. Hirao-kun...
TH-THAT'S NOT FAIR, HIRAO-SENPAI!
MMPHM MMPH-MPHMPH!!
(You're hopeless!!)
WHISPER
I'D RATHER YOU DIDN'T. IF THINGS GET ANY MORE MESSED UP THAN THEY ALREADY ARE, I'LL NEVER LIVE IT DOWN.
WHISPER WHISPER
MMPH MMMPH MPHPH MMMMMPH MMPH MMPH MMPHPH MMPH MMMPH MMMPH.
(The favor would be letting me say it, since you're too much of a gutless wonder to say it yourself)
HUH--?
Leggo already!
Ow!
THIS IS GROSSLY UNACCEP-TABLE!!
I-I-I...
...SEKINE-KUN?


Library
sniff
I KNOW I'M LITTLE MORE THAN A BOOTLICKER TO HER...
...BUT THOSE ARE TOUGH BOOTS TO LICK, AND MOST PEOPLE COULDN'T KEEP UP.
sniff
sniff
KAGURAZAKA-SAN IS JUST SO... SO...SO MEAN!
sniff
sob
... YABE-SENPAI ...

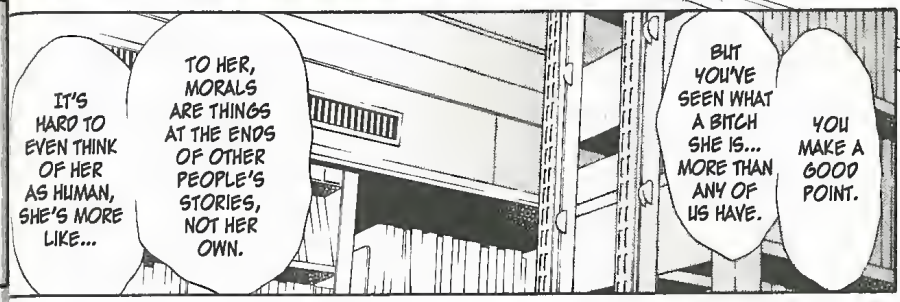
I HATE YOU, KAGURAZAKA-SAN!
I'M NEVER SPEAKING TO YOU EVER AGAIN!!
WAAAAAAAAAH
...MEAN IT...OH, BOY.
LOOK WHO'S TALKING! THIS IS YOUR FAULT, MAN!
THAT WAS UNNECESSARILY HARSH. EVEN FOR YOU.
SEKINE-KUN...!
DON'T LISTEN TO HER! SHE DOESN'T ...

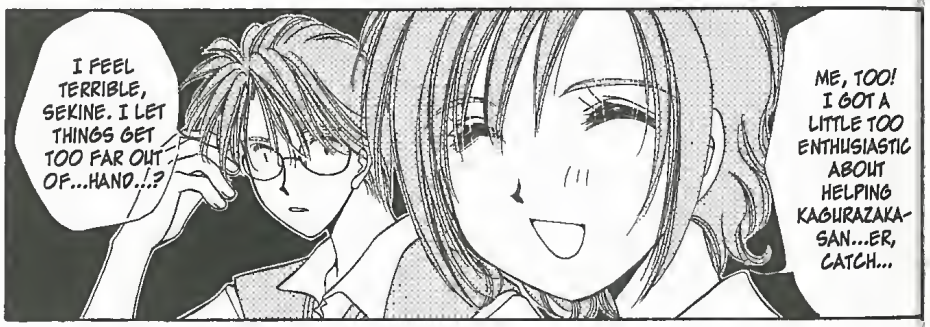
...OH.
YOU'RE MY SLAVE, AND SLAVES SPEAK ONLY WHEN SPOKEN TO! DUMBASS!
GET BACK HERE OR I'LL REALLY GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO CRY ABOUT!
EEEK!!!
Do you have no feelings?
You better watch the attitude with me, you runt!
ARE YOU SECRETLY THE DEVIL?
...never... speaking...?

I'M STARTING TO UNDERSTAND WHY YOU HAVE A CRUSH ON KAGURAZAKA-SAN.
Sado-masoch-ism?
IT'S SWEET, SEKINE-KUN.
MEANWHILE, YABE...
SMOKE

ALL SHE THINKS ABOUT IS HERSELF.
WHO ELSE BUT ME WOULD ...?
sob
sniff
sniff
SENPAI ...?
ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME, YABE-SENPAI?
どぅ??
HRK? OH! YEAH...
So much for his nap.

AND I APOLOGIZE FOR CREATING THE CONFUSION THAT LEAD TO THIS MESS.
Root cause of the problem
IF I HAD KNOWN, I WOULDN'T HAVE SAID ALL THOSE AWFUL THINGS.
I ASSUMED KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN HAD MADE YOU HER LAPDOG AGAINST YOUR WILL.


IT'S HARD TO EVEN THINK OF HER AS HUMAN, SHE'S MORE LIKE...
TO HER, MORALS ARE THINGS AT THE ENDS OF OTHER PEOPLE'S STORIES, NOT HER OWN.
BUT YOU'VE SEEN WHAT A BITCH SHE IS... MORE THAN ANY OF US HAVE.
YOU MAKE A GOOD POINT.


I FEEL TERRIBLE, SEKINE. I LET THINGS GET TOO FAR OUT OF...HAND...?
ME, TOO! I GOT A LITTLE TOO ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT HELPING KAGURAZAKA-SAN...ER, CATCH...

HUH?!

...I...
THAT'S WHY I...
EVER SINCE THEN, I'VE ALWAYS...
"IF YOU'RE GOING TO BITE SOME-THING OFF, IT SHOULDN'T BE YOUR OWN TONGUE."
YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR!
SHE IS NOT!
..A WILD ANIMAL.
SHE'S NOT BAD, SHE'S JUST MISUNDER-STOOD.
Give it a rest, will you? I just pulled an all-nighter and I'm dead tired...
DEEP DOWN, SHE'S REALLY A NICE PERSON!

IF YOU'RE ABOUT TO GET RAPED, AND YOU GET THE CHANCE...
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BITE SOMETHING OFF, IT SHOULDN'T BE YOUR OWN TONGUE.
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
ARE YOU STUPID OR SOME-THING?
...YOU BITE OFF HIS =CENSORED=
"I'M NO 'GOOD GUY,' AND I AIN'T HERE TO 'SAVE' YOU."
EVER SINCE THEN, KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN HAS ALWAYS PROTECTED ME.
...AND THAT'S HOW SHE SAVED ME.
HALF-KILLING YOUR ATTACKER IN THE PROCESS, I BET...
I CAN TOTALLY HEAR HER SAY THAT.

NO!
SENPAI, STOP!
THIS IS NOT OKAY!
QUIT FUSSING AND RELAX. EVERY-BODY'S A LITTLE NERVOUS THEIR FIRST TIME.
I HAD BEEN DRAGGED OFF TO THE GYM'S STORAGE SHED, AND I WAS ABOUT TO BE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF.
BACK THEN, I WAS ALWAYS GETTING ATTACKED BY SOME PERVERT OR ANOTHER.
for some odd reason
WHA-?!
A world we never knew about...
WHO...
...ARE YOU?
I HAD ONLY JUST STARTED JUNIOR HIGH WHEN I MET KAGURAZAKA-SAN.
IF YOU DON'T LET GO OF ME RIGHT NOW...
I'LL BITE OFF MY OWN TONGUE AND BLEED TO DEATH!
BUT RIGHT WHEN I THOUGHT I WAS DONE FOR...

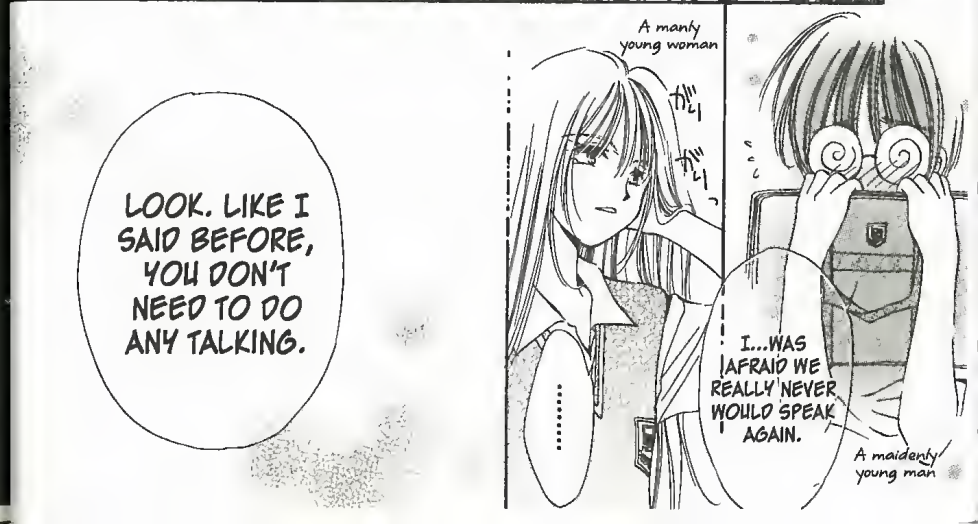
"BUT I WILL MAKE YOU A DEAL."
"FROM HERE ON OUT, YOU'LL BE IN SERVICE TO ME AND DO WHATEVER I TELL YOU."
"AS LONG AS YOU'RE WITH ME..."
"...I'LL MAKE SURE NO ONE MESSES WITH YOU."
SAVING ME HAS EARNED HER A FEW BRUISES OVER TIME...
BUT...
AND, IN THE END, GIRLS SHOULD BE PROTECTED, NOT GIVING THE PROTECTION.
SOME-ONE LIKE ME...
...WILL NEVER BE RIGHT FOR HER.
...SHE PROBABLY HATES ME NOW, ANY-WAY.
BESIDES, AFTER WHAT I SAID...
"I HATE YOU, KAGURAZAKA-SAN! I'M NEVER SPEAKING TO YOU EVER AGAIN!!"
WHEN I THINK ABOUT IT, I UNDERSTAND.
NO MATTER HOW STRONG KAGURAZAKA-SAN IS, SHE'S STILL A GIRL.
SOME-ONE LIKE HER...
...NEEDS A MAN LIKE HIRAO-SENPAI OR YABE-SENPAI.
HUH ...?
...KEEP THIS ARRANGE-MENT GOING FOREVER, CAN WE?
...WE CAN'T...
...HM?

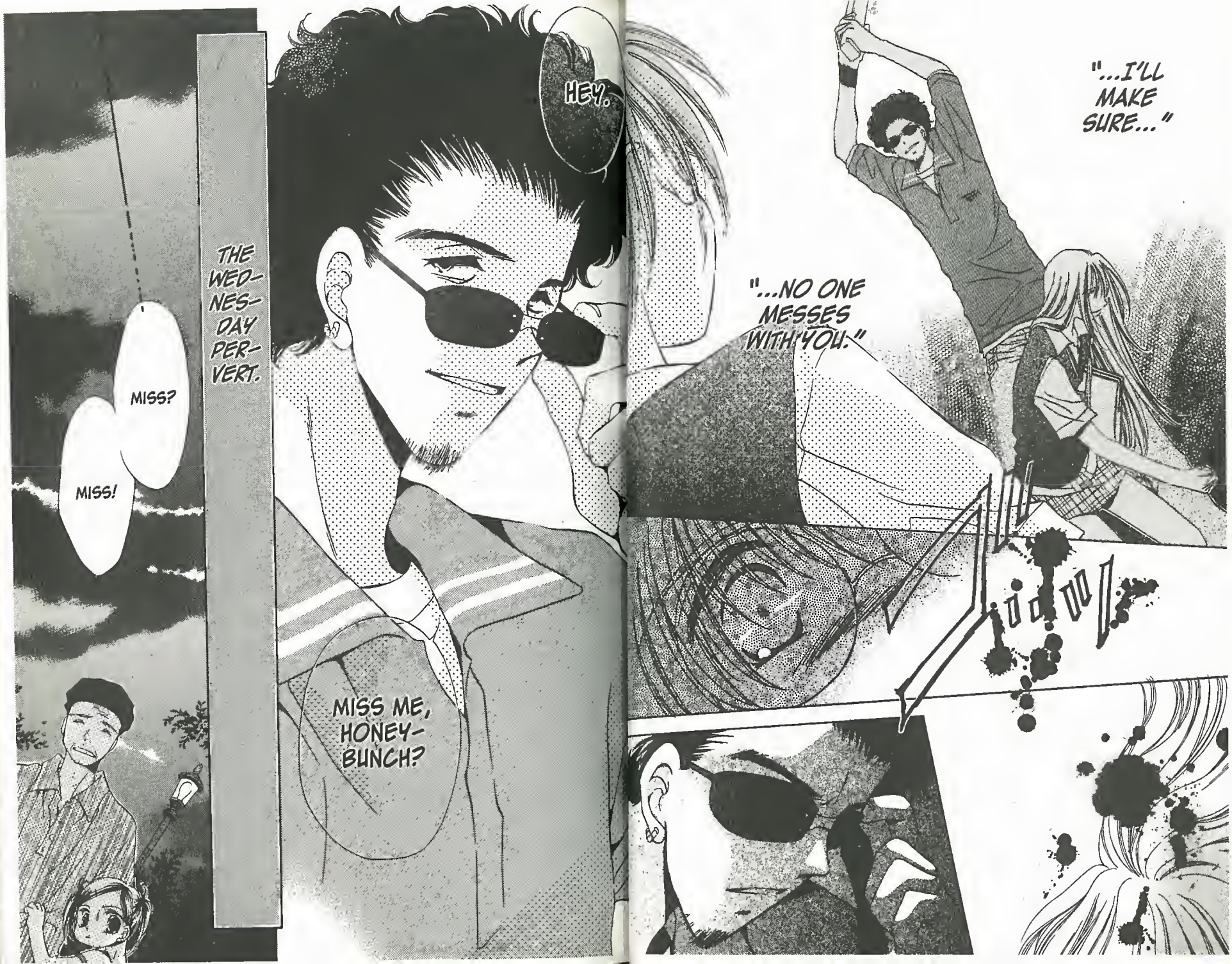
I...
...SHOULD HAVE APPRECIATED WHAT WE HAD TOGETHER!
BEING HER LACKEY MEANT I COULD ALWAYS BE AROUND HER...
IT'LL BE OKAY.
KAGURAZAKA-SAN DOESN'T CARE ABOUT THINGS LIKE "A WOMAN'S PROPER PLACE" OR "WHAT A MAN SHOULD DO."
SHE'S JUST NOT THAT KIND OF GIRL.
YURI, QUEEN OF SKETCHY GENERALIZATIONS.
IF SHE LEFT YOU STANDING, THEN SHE DOESN'T HATE YOU.
WHAT? IS THAT ALL?
HUH?!
IF YOU REALLY HAD MADE KAGURAZAKA-SAN HATE YOU...
...SHE WOULD'VE CRACKED YOUR HEAD OPEN BEFORE YOU HAD A CHANCE TO THINK ABOUT RUNNING AWAY.
BESIDES, SHE'S THE TYPE WHO FORGETS SHE WAS MAD IN, LIKE, 30 SECONDS.
I BET SHE'LL OPEN THAT DOOR ANY MINUTE NOW AND--
Hair's completely back to normal
SEKINE! YOU IN HERE?
...WHAT?
C'MON WE'RE LEAVING.
I'M WALKING YOU HOME.
DID YOU FORGET IT'S WEDNES-DAY?
Wednesday?
Y-Y--

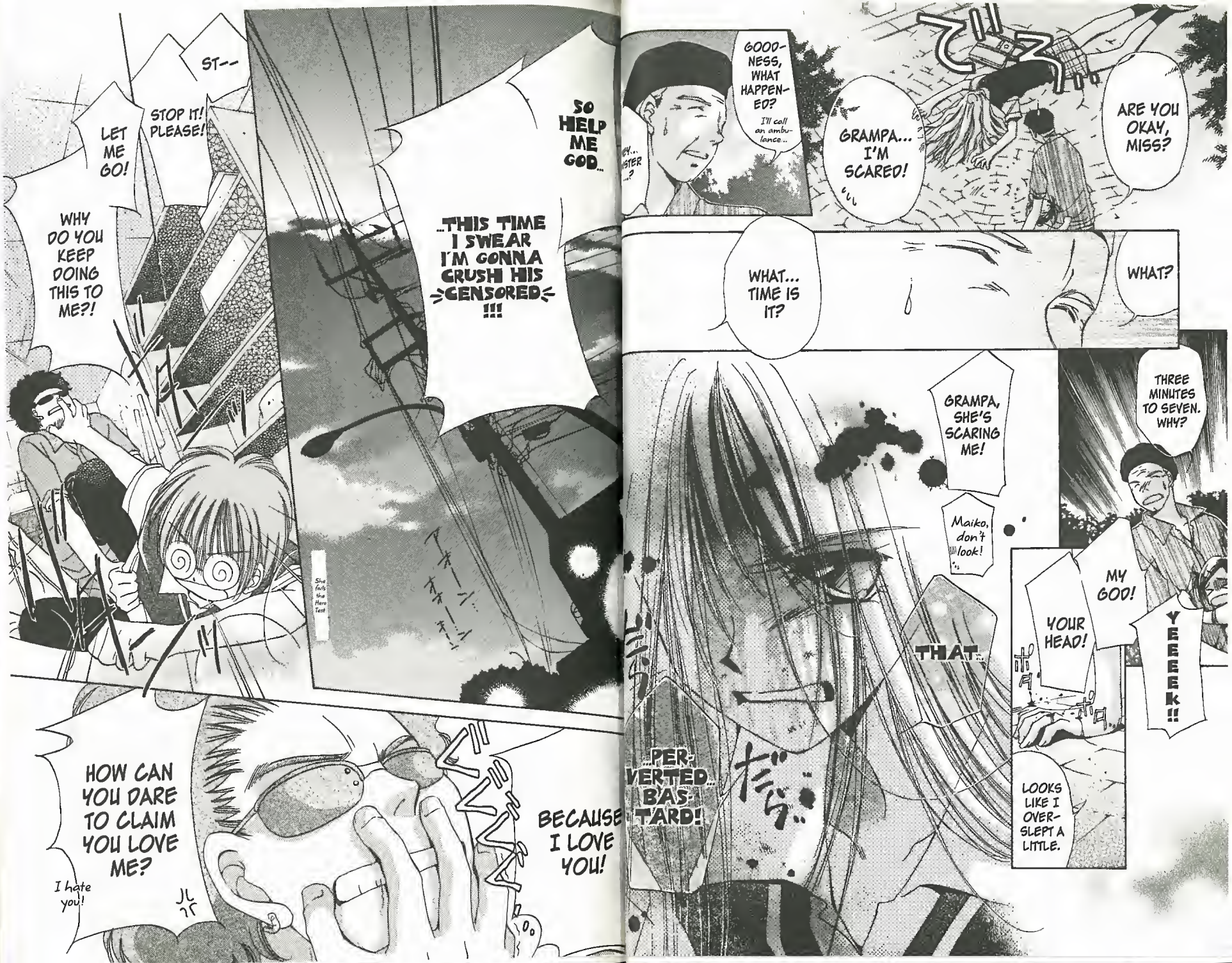
I KNOW THE FEELING...
OH! LOOK OVER THERE! SOME OF THOSE PRETTY GIRLS YOU LIKE SO MUCH ARE--
WHO CARES ABOUT SOME FAT CAT? THE WAY YOU SQUEAL, YOU'D THINK YOU WERE EIGHT.
BUT IT'S SO CUTE!
Let's save the big feelings until we sort out who loves whom.
OOPS.
Wow.
HE LIKES KAGURA-ZAKA-SA THAT MUC ...?
KAGU-RAZAKA-SAN, LOOK!
SEE HOW PUDGY THAT KITTY IS? ISN'T IT CUTE?!
I DON'T CARE HOW BADLY HE SPRAWLS OUT...
...OR THAT HE SNORES.
HE SURE DOES LOOK PRECIOUS WHEN HE SLEEPS.
STILL...
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
NOT TO ME. NEVER. YEAH, HE LOOKS LIKE A TOTAL DORK, BUT SO WHAT?
AND HE MAY LOVE ANOTHER GIRL...BUT AGAIN, WHO CARES?
...AS LONG AS I CAN BE WITH HIM. ALWAYS.
I DON'T CARE WHAT HAPPENS...

チャリーン
OOH.
A 100-YEN COIN.
Huh?
"AS LONG AS YOU'RE WITH ME..."
"BUT I WILL MAKE YOU A DEAL."
"FROM HERE ON OUT, YOU'LL BE IN SERVICE TO ME AND DO WHATEVER I TELL YOU."
I MEAN...
"I'M NO 'GOOD GUY,' AND I AIN'T HERE TO 'SAVE' YOU."
...WE HAD A DEAL, RIGHT?

N-NO... I had, I would have turned it over to the police already
DID YOU FIND A WALLET FULL OF CASH OR SOMETHING?
ME?!
YOU THINK SO?!
WHY THE HELL ARE YOU IN SUCH A GOOD MOOD? YOU'RE BOUNCING ALL OVER THE PLACE.
OKAY, THEN MAYBE SOME HOT PORN ...?
IT'S NOTHING LIKE THAT. I'M JUST GLAD YOU'RE WALKING ME HOME.
WHAT?!
I DIDN'T THINK YOU WOULD, AND THEN WHEN YOU SHOWED UP...
WELL, YOU KNOW. WE DID HAVE THAT ARGUMENT.


LOOK. LIKE I SAID BEFORE, YOU DON'T NEED TO DO ANY TALKING.
A manly young woman
.....
I...WAS AFRAID WE REALLY NEVER WOULD SPEAK AGAIN.
A maidenly young man


MISS?
MISS!
THE WED-NES-DAY PER-VERT.
HEY.
MISS ME, HONEY-BUNCH?
"...I'LL MAKE SURE..."
"...NO ONE MESSES WITH YOU."


ARE YOU OKAY, MISS?
GRAMPA... I'M SCARED!
GOOD-NESS, WHAT HAPPEN-ED?
I'll call an ambu-lance..
WHAT?
WHAT... TIME IS IT?
THREE MINUTES TO SEVEN. WHY?
YEEEEEk!!
MY GOD!
YOUR HEAD!
LOOKS LIKE I OVER-SLEPT A LITTLE.
GRAMPA, SHE'S SCARING ME!
Maiko, don't look!
THAT...
...PER-VERTED... BAS-TARD!
ST--
STOP IT! PLEASE!
LET ME GO!
WHY DO YOU KEEP DOING THIS TO ME?!
SO HELP ME GOD..
...THIS TIME I SWEAR I'M GONNA CRUSH HIS ≠CENSORED≠ !!!
She fails the Hero Test
HOW CAN YOU DARE TO CLAIM YOU LOVE ME?
I hate you!
BECAUSE I LOVE YOU!

The Transvestite Squad
Fighting ability: zilch.
The Muscle Squad
He's probably the one who knows..
The Aesthetic Squad
The Killer
Rainbow Army
Sorry!! I admit I don't really know how to write gay people..
NO LITTLE GIRL CAN HANDLE A WALLOP LIKE THAT.
THAT'S IF I DIDN'T SPLIT HER SKULL OPEN.
THE ONLY WAY SHE COULD FIND THIS PLACE IS IF SHE WENT UP TO A DOZEN OF MY FRIENDS...
...AND BEAT THE CLUES OUT OF THEM.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON BETWEEN YOU AND HER...
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK SHE'D PUT THAT MUCH EFFORT INTO A GUY LIKE YOU?
...BUT I'LL ASK YOU THIS...

YOU HURT KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN! I'LL NEVER FORGIVE YOU!
I WISH YOU WERE DEAD!
GIMME A BREAK! THIS ONE TIME, SHE PUT ME IN THE HOSPITAL FOR THREE WEEKS!
IT WAS SELF-DE-FENSE!
WHEN I HEARD YOU TOOK OVER YOUR FAMILY'S CAFE, I'D HOPED YOU HAD GROWN UP A LITTLE!
CAN'T YOU FIND SOME OTHER HOBBY TO OCCUPY YOUR TIME EVERY WEDNESDAY ?!
What for?
BESIDES, E CAFE IS LOSED ON ONESDAY. 'S A WIN-WIN!
IF NOTHING ELSE, I LOOK MORE MATURE!
.....
AND WHO SAYS I HAVEN'T CLEANED UP? CHECK IT! IT'S ALL ABOUT HYGIENE IN THE RESTAURANT BIZ!
YIKES!!
NEVER! I WOULDN'T GO IN THERE IF I WERE STARVING TO DEATH!
YOU SHOULD COME BY FOR THE DAILY SPECIAL SOMETIME.
Y'KNOW ...
YOU CAN TRY TO STALL ME, BUT YOUR BABYSITTER ISN'T COMING.

"...WE HAD A DEAL, RIGHT?"
I WANT...
...TO BE CLOSER TO HER THAN ANYONE ELSE.
OW...
OW...!
I...
"FROM HERE ON OUT, YOU'LL BE IN SERVICE TO ME."
"BUT I WILL MAKE YOU A DEAL."
I...
I...
"...NO ONE MESSES WITH YOU."
...I'LL BE OKAY. YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT ME...
"IF ATTACKED BY A RAPIST-- IF YOU GET THE CHANCE, BITE OFF HIS--"
LEGGO LEGGO LEGGO!!
HIS FINGER WILL HAVE TO DO!
CHOMP CHOMP CHOMP
No-- not his finger, you moron!!
-Sekine's Inner Kagura-zaka.
CHOMP CHOMP CHOMP
THAT HURT! DAM MIT!!

I'LL KILL YOU!
THINK AGAIN, MEATHEAD.
HUH?
...DEAD!
WHAT ...?
BECAUSE IT'S HARD TO KILL SOMEONE WHEN YOU'RE...
WHA ?!
WHY YOU--!
GET OFFA ME, YA LITTLE FREAK!
GIVE YOU AN INCH, AND YOU TAKE A DAMN MILE.
I CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE THIS FIGHT.
HERE I WAS THINKING ABOUT BEING GENTLER WITH YOU, BUT FORGET IT NOW.
...TO FINALLY DESERVE HER.
IF YOU DON'T STOP RIGHT NOW...
I'LL BITE OFF YOUR FINGER... OR ANYTHING ELSE I CAN GET MY MOUTH ON!
IF YOU...
I HAVE TO GET CLOSER TO HER...BE MORE LIKE HER...

SEKINE IS MY BITCH. MINE.
YEEP!
Spoken like a yakuza
YOUR INABILITY TO LEARN YOUR LESSON HAS NOW BROUGHT A WORLD OF PAIN ON ALL THOSE FRIENDS OF YOURS.
OMI-GOSH... OMI-GOSH...
LISTEN UP, BECAUSE THIS IS THE LAST TIME I'LL SAY THIS...
YOU'RE IN OVER YOUR HEAD, LOSER.
GOT IT?
WHICH MEANS HE'S STRICTLY OFF-LIMITS TO DIRTBAGS LIKE YOU.
WHAT?!
PREPARE FOR YOUR FINAL PUNISHMENT.
YES'M-- WHOA! WAIT A MINUTE! FINISH ME?
There they are!
LET'S FINISH YOU OFF, THEN.
EXCEL-LENT!
Sigh...
Y-YES, MA'AM!
I ASKED YOU A QUES-TION!

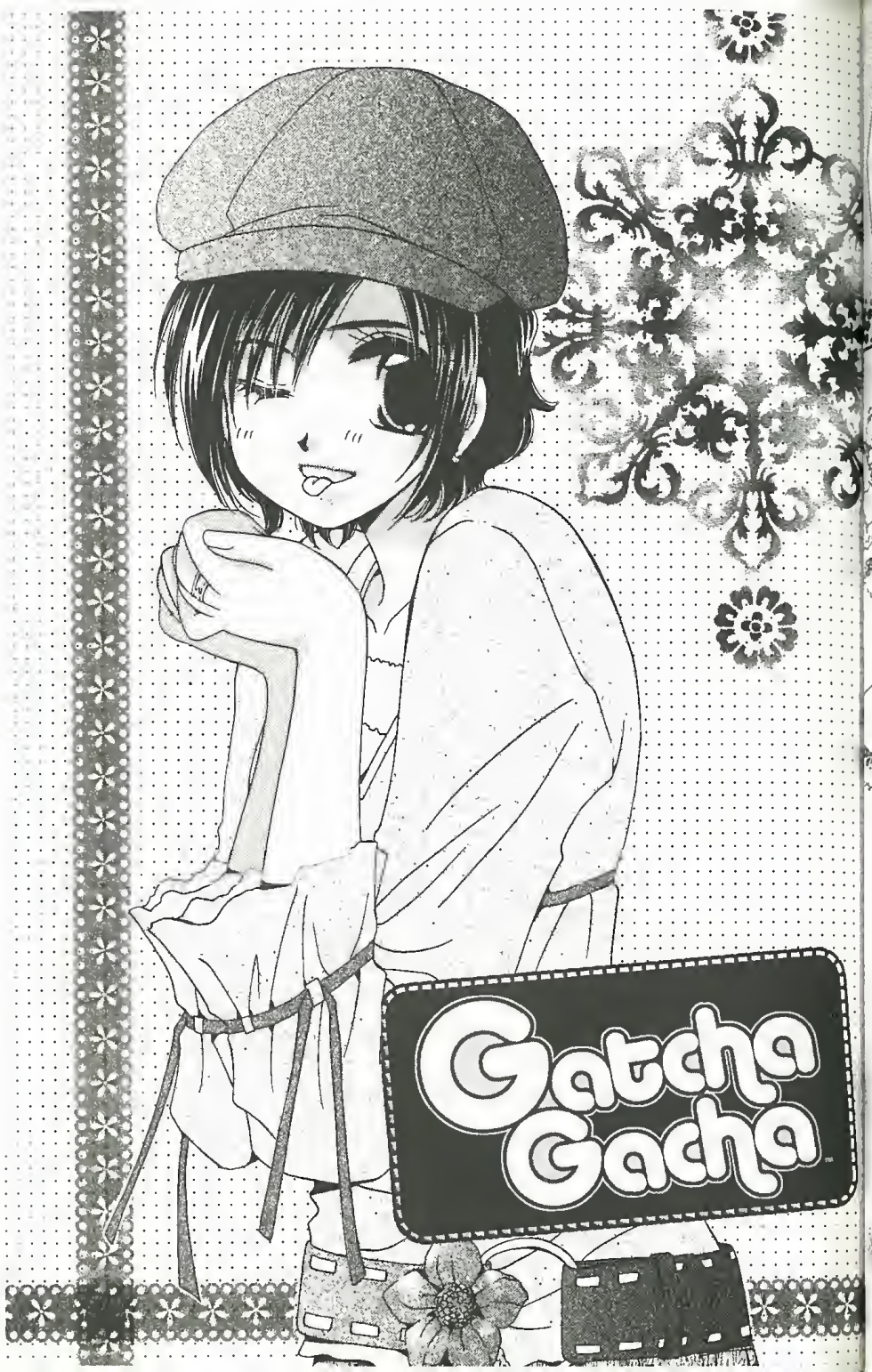
...UGH...!
THUD
Mrph!
-MAY I K YOUR AME... A'AM?
MIND YOUR MANNERS, CREEP. "MAY I ASK YOUR NAME?" IS WAY MORE POLITE.
WHO...
...THE HELL ...?
THE IMMORTAL MOTOKO KAGURAZAKA... YOUR NEW LORD AND MASTER.
CERTAINLY.

I INVADED THE CREEP'S LAIR AND THROTTLED IT OUT OF EVERY LAST ONE OF HIS GOONS.
(Read: the café)
BUT HOW DID YOU FIND THIS PLACE?
SEEMS OKAY TO ME. JUST A LITTLE BLOOD LOSS...
There's a small cut on her forehead.
N-NEVER MIND ME--IS KAGURAZAKA-SAN ALL RIGHT?
Reason: Acquaintance's house closest to where she was. Bonus: Doctor's clinic.
IT SURE DID FREAK ME OUT, THOUGH, WHEN SHE TEXT MESSAGED ME ORDERS TO GO TO HIRAO-SENPAI'S HOUSE.
IT WAS MORE SHOCKING IN PERSON.
Hon--! Dad: get over here!
Get me a towel and another shirt!
NORMALLY I COULD HAVE MANAGED ON MY OWN...
...BUT THERE WASN'T ANY TIME TO FOOL AROUND.
THAT'S WHY I GOT THESE TWO TO HELP.

GAHHH!!
No...
PLEASE MERCY!!
MERCY!
QUIT YOUR BLUBBERIN'. IT'LL BE OVER IN A SECOND.
WAIT!
WHAT?!
...I'LL CRUSH YOU BUT GOOD.
THIS TIME...
CRUSH! WHAT?!
Huh?
DEAD FAINT
gurgle
KAGURAZAKA-SAN, DON'T YOU THINK YOU WENT A LITTLE OVERBOARD?
ARE YOU OKAY, SEKINE-KUN?
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF SUCH SADISTIC METHODS.
Chills my soul.
Dammit. Now my shoes'll get grass.
What a twisted idea.
WHAT? I MEANT "CRUSH" FIGURATIVELY.
THAT ROTTEN TANGERINE I STOMPED WAS JUST FOR EFFECT.

WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU?
THERE'S NO ONE IN THE WORLD...
WHAT THE HELL?!
...I LOVE MORE THAN YOU.
I'M YOURS FOREVER, KAGURAZAKA-SAN.
KAGURAZAKA-SAN, YOUR WISH IS MY COMMAND UNTIL THE DAY THAT I DIE!!
YEP...
...TWICE NOW SHE'S PULLED HIM OUT OF A TIGHT SPOT?
THIS MAKES, WHAT...
YOU WANNA END UP IN TEARS AGAIN?!
JEEZ!! GET OFFA ME, RUNT!

Wasn't invited anyway. He just followed out of concern for Yuri.
IT'S NO BIG DEAL. ALL WE DID WAS GATHER A LITTLE INFORMATION.
We kept our hands to ourselves.
I DIDN'T DO ANY FIGHTING. I MORE... OBSERVED.
THANK YOU.
...WAS KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN.
THE ONE WHO DID ALL THE WORK...
WAH!
...YOUR LACKEY FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!
HECK, SHE WAS SO MAD, I'M AMAZED EVERYONE'S STILL BREATHING.
I'M GOING TO BE...


Gatcha Gacha

Hmmm...
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE PHRASE "LOVE ON A ROPE BRIDGE"?
Where two people equate the thrill of crossing a rope bridge over a deep chasm to the thrill of love...
YEAH. IN SOME PLACES THEY CALL THAT "STOCKHOLM SYNDROME."
The tormented loving the tormentor.
EVEN SO...
Get off me, shrimp! That's an order!
I don't want to.
...IF SEKINE-KUN IMAGINES HIMSELF HAPPY, THAT'S REALLY ALL THAT MATTERS.
MEANWHILE, YABE...
...wakes up alone in a darkened classroom.
WHOA.
MAIL FROM MOTOKO. NOW THAT'S RARE.
"Go to Hirao's house. Now...?
TARDY!

"THAT'S WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. IT'S ANNOYING."
"YOU'RE TOO..."
"...???-????...!"
...BUT WHY...?
WHY DO THEY ALL SAY THE SAME THING?
N--
Noooooo!! I DON'T WANT TO BREAK UP!!

"I-I'M NOT MAD ANY MORE, MA-KUN! NOT ABOUT THAT TIME YOU CHEATED ON ME..."
...OR THAT YOU'RE WAYS OVER F AN HOUR ATE FOR R DATES... OR THAT OU STOLE MONEY UT OF MY ALLET...!"
"..."
"YURI, WE NEED TO BREAK UP."
"W-WHY ...?"

The Pianist (non-fiction)

The story of a Jewish man (a pianist) who lived in Poland in 1939, and all the atrocities he went through after the Nazis took over. Some of the things the Nazis put the Jews through were absolutely insane. I'm still reeling from it. It's amazing that no matter how cruel and bigoted a society they're in, some people are strong enough to hold on to hope and fight their way to freedom. I've learned that running away, that simply surviving, can be another way of fighting back.

Reading this, I found myself blurting things out unintentionally (mostly "Oh, my God!"). I've never done that with a book before.

Personally, now I really want to read about Dr. Korczak.

...I didn't go see the movie when it was in theaters. (;-;) I think I'll go buy the DVD.

Now what's she up to?
Had enough yet, Muroi?
HIRAO, WHAT ANSWER DID YOU GET TO THIS PROBLEM?
HEH
AW, RATS!
Not convincing enough! Three more laps!
I'll never sleep in class again!
Sorry! I'm huff... sorry!

SO, YOU CAN PAY ATTENTION EVEN WHEN STARING OUT THE WINDOW.
How'd he get that right...?
CORRECT AS USUAL, HIRAO.
THEREFORE, T = -1 3/5.
SMOOTH AS SILK.
IF |C|² = 16, THEN 5T² + 2 + 13 = 16.
GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE
Math II

USUALLY YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT CLASS, SO IT REALLY SURPRISED ME TO SEE YOUR MIND WANDERING OFF THE LECTURE.
OH, YES, YOU WERE.
I... WASN'T..., STARING AT ANYTHING.
ぷし...

...MUROI! ARE YOU TRYING TO GET ME FIRED?
Half-asleep
NOT EVER, NEVER EVER, WE'LL ALWAYS BE TOGETHER!!
"YOU'RE TOO...???????...!"

はひぃ
Q. Which of the following words belongs in the space represented by the ??????? in the above panel?
①. moronic
②. aggravating
③. smelly
④. all of the above

I NOTICED HE HADN'T COME BACK AFTER LUNCH.
BUT... WHAT IN THE WORLD...
WHAT IS HE DOING OUT THERE?
...HUH?
HERE IT COMES ...!
WHAT THE--?
...IS TAKAHIRO YABE DOING ON THE TRACK?!
YEEP!
Bullseye!
YOU HAVEN'T FINALLY DISCOVERED GIRLS, HAVE YOU?
Chose his jibe at random.
Rabid Beast
Nya ha ha ha!
THIS COULD BE A BLESSING IN DISGUISE...
True Desire
IT COULD START SOME RUMORS THAT I'M REALLY AFTER MUROI, NOT THAT RABID BEAST...
Hm? What? Where?
EXPOSED ...?!
NO. WAIT.
HMM?
HNNN?
Of course, to have such a hope only proves that you've gone insane.
...AND THEN MAYBE I COULD FINALLY TELL HER THE TRUTH...!

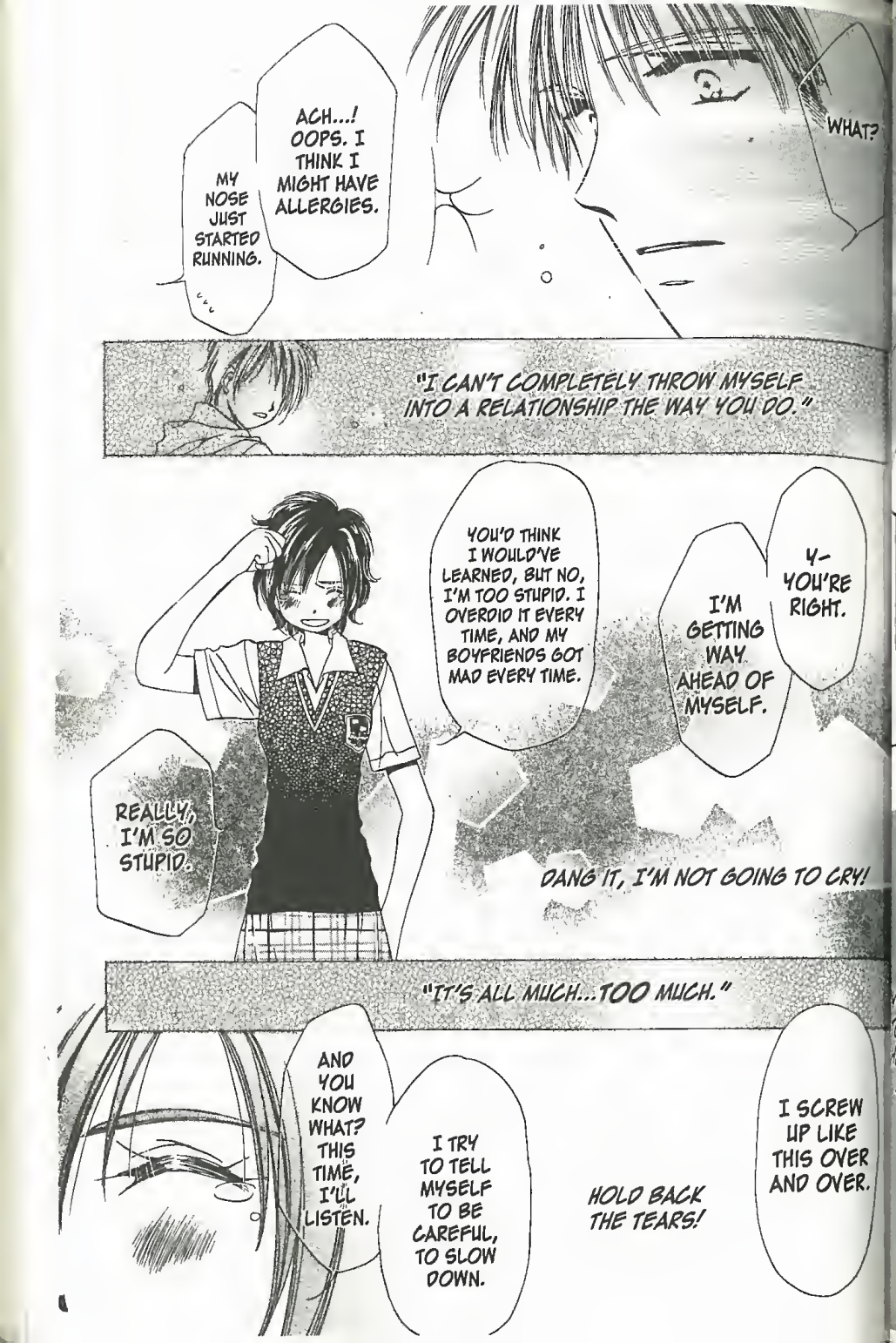
HE'S SO SWEET.
SIGH...
IT WAS THE SECOND TIME I EVER SPOKE TO YOU.
YEAH, I REMEMBER. YOU WERE GETTING CHASED DOWN THE HALLWAY BY YOUR GIRLFRIEND.
Ha ha ha!
HEY, WE DID THIS ONCE BEFORE, REMEMBER?
YOU WOULDN'T HAVE SUCH PROBLEMS IF YOU STUCK TO ONE GIRLFRIEND AT A TIME.
Yea
I WAS AFRAID FOR MY LIFE WITH THAT GIRL
"Bug outta here"
UM... SENPAI? IS SCHOOL ALREADY OVER?
Ha ha ha ha!
IT COULD ONLY HAPPEN TO YOU! I WAS GONNA BUG OUTTA HERE, BUT THEN I SAW YOU KILLING YOURSELF LIKE THIS...
...AND FIGURED I'D SAY GOOD-BYE BEFORE YOU DIE.
WOW ...
Senpai, if you don't work harder, you'll get held back a year.
SHADDUP. I STUCK AROUND LONGER THAN USUAL!
Now that you mention it, I'd rather not repeat this grade.
Then again, if you did get held back a year, you'd be in the same class as me. Wouldn't that be cool?
EVEN THOUGH I'M GETTING ON HIS CASE, HE'S STILL HANGING WITH ME.
JEEZ ?!
YABE-SENPAI! WHY CAN'T YOU JUST GO AWAY?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING RUNNING AROUND THE TRACK LIKE THIS?
IT'S...HUFF... PUNISHMENT FOR...GASP ...FALLING ASLEEP IN CLASS.

...YOU CAN TRUST ME! I'LL NEVER...
...EVER HURT YOU! NOT EVEN A LITTLE!
"I HAD TO PUNISH YABE. HE WANTED TO TAKE YOU AWAY FROM ME."

--I DUNNO-- ME, FOR INSTANCE.
L-L--
--LIKE, MAYBE--
I--
I'LL MAKE YOU HAPPY, SENPAI! I PROMISE!
I LOVE YOU!
I'LL NEVER, EVER CHEAT ON YOU.
"SHE STABBED HIM WITH HER HATRED..."
REALLY, REALLY KE YOU, SO...
A- AND...
I REALLY, REALLY LOVE YOU!
I CAN PUT UP WITH JUST ABOUT ANYTHING.
I'LL EVEN WAIT ON YOU HAND AND FOOT IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES.
YOU WON'T FIND A BETTER BARGAIN.
Um, Yuri...
...I think you're missing the point.

YURI, THIS IS TOO...
...YOU'RE BEING... TOO HEAVY.
...BUT THIS IS TOO MUCH FOR ME.
MAYBE IF YOU CHILLED OUT, IT WOULDN'T BE SO HEAVY...

"I DON'T CARE ABOUT HIM, OR WHETHER HE LIVES OR DIES!"
"I HATE YOU!"
"I HATE YOU!"


WHAT?
ACH...! OOPS. I THINK I MIGHT HAVE ALLERGIES.
MY NOSE JUST STARTED RUNNING.
"I CAN'T COMPLETELY THROW MYSELF INTO A RELATIONSHIP THE WAY YOU DO."
Y-YOU'RE RIGHT.
I'M GETTING WAY AHEAD OF MYSELF.
YOU'D THINK I WOULD'VE LEARNED, BUT NO, I'M TOO STUPID. I OVERDID IT EVERY TIME, AND MY BOYFRIENDS GOT MAD EVERY TIME.
REALLY, I'M SO STUPID.
DANG IT, I'M NOT GOING TO CRY!
"IT'S ALL MUCH...TOO MUCH."
I SCREW UP LIKE THIS OVER AND OVER.
I TRY TO TELL MYSELF TO BE CAREFUL, TO SLOW DOWN.
AND YOU KNOW WHAT? THIS TIME, I'LL LISTEN.
HOLD BACK THE TEARS!

I'M...
I THINK IT'S CUTE THE WAY YOU TRY SO HARD AT EVERYTHING...
...BUT YOU'RE TRYING TOO HARD WITH ME.
I AM...?
...TOO "HEAVY"?
...HM?

In the first chapter of this volume, Sekine had to deal with his senpai, the "Wednesday Pervert." I couldn't tell you why, but I had a lot of fun drawing him. I was hoping to use him and the Killer Rainbow Army a little more, but he's not the kind of character shojo manga fans clamor for more of. So, I choked back my tears and bid him a fond farewell at the end of that chapter.

Still, I might draw him again some day. He had a cool look.

I'll probably get a lot of angry fan-letters about the Killer Rainbow Army. "You don't understand homosexuals at all!" they'll say. They'll be right, too. I really don't.

I'm stupid that way. Sorry.

AREN'T YOU GLAD I WASN'T CRUSHED?

AH, WELL. BACK TO CLASS...

Hm?

WHAT'S YABE GETTING HIMSELF INTO NOW?

HE SAID HE WAS GOING TO THE INFIRMARY BECAUSE HE WAS FEELING SICK, BUT HE LOOKED MORE LIKE HE WAS PISSED OFF.

yammer yammer yammer

VANISHED!

...WHERE'S HIRAO?

Infirmary

IF YOU THINK I'M GOING TO LET YOU STAY HERE ALL DAY, THINK AGAIN!

YOU'VE MILKED THIS "I'M SICK" BUSINESS LONG ENOUGH!!

HEY!

...HATE ME NOW...OR ANYTHING...?

I HOPE YOU DON'T...

I PROMISE.

YES! NO TEARS!

...OKAY?

...YURI?

What the heck?!

Forgive me, Sensei!! It's because of allergies! I swear!!

Allergies? At this time of year?

MY ALLERGIES ...!

I'M SORRY, SENPAI!!

...SUCH A COWARD!

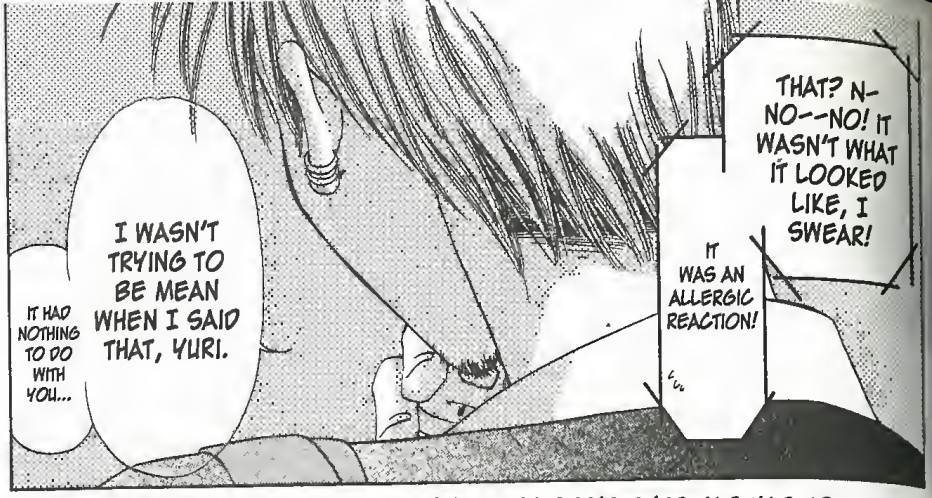
YURI!

GET OFF YOUR LAZY BUTT AND MARCH TO CLASS, FAKER!
BUT... MY HEAD STILL HURTS...
IF THAT WERE TRUE, YOU'D BE ASLEEP, NOT READING PORNO MAGS AND SCARFING DOWN SQUID JERKY!
WHATEVER. I DID HAVE SOMEONE CRACK ME IN THE SKULL ONLY TWO DAYS AGO, YOU KNOW.
I KNOW! AND I ALSO KNOW THAT IT'S PROBABLY COMPLETELY HEALED BY NOW!
YOU ALWAYS DID HAVE THE HEALING POWER OF SOME KIND OF MUTANT.
Talk about creepy...
WHAT-EVER. HEY...
...HEAR ANY GOOD RUMORS LATELY?
I MEAN, GIRLS HANG OUT HERE GOSSIPING ALL THE TIME, RIGHT?
NOTHING VULGAR ENOUGH THAT YOU'D WANT TO HEAR--
Oh. No, wait!
I HEARD ONE ABOUT KUZUYAMA-SENSEI SUPPOSEDLY BEING GAY.
Thanks to that rumor, his life was forever changed.
Masao Kuzuyama, age 29. Single.
AND I WAS THE ONE WHO STARTED IT.
OLD NEWS.
HMM, WHAT ELSE ...?
OH, YEAH!
EVERY SO OFTEN, I HEAR A REALLY SCARY ONE THAT SAYS THE STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT EITHER HAS CONFESSED, OR NEVER WILL CONFESS, HIS UNDYING LOVE FOR YOU.
Will or won't: pick one.
STARTED THAT ONE, I BET.
WHICH DOESN'T EXCUSE HIM BEING SUCH A USELESS DORK.
HE'S POPULAR. EVERYBODY LOVES TALKING ABOUT HIM.
IT KEEPS 'EM HAPPY.
ALL RIGHT. I GUESS I SHOULD LET THE PEASANTS SEE THEIR QUEEN.
...A what?
HUH...?
HM?
NO POINT GOING TO CLASS...
Don't leave your dirty magazines in here!
Heh-heh. I'll tell Yagi-senpai they're yours.

HOLD STILL!
WHAT THE--?! WATCH IT, MAN!
HUH?!
Hirao?
Glancing blow
Like hell!
I WAS TRYING TO BREAK YOUR JAW!
ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND? GET A GRIP!
IF THAT'D ACTUALLY CONNECTED, YOU WOULD'VE BROKEN MY JAW!
YOU'RE THE STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT!
AND YOUR NOSE! AND MAYBE YOUR NECK, TOO!
That's the last time I'll miss.
YOU CAN'T GO AROUND PICKING FIGHTS LIKE THIS IF YOU WANNA BE RE-ELECTED!
WHOA! HOLD IT HIRAO! WAIT A SECOND!
RIGHT NOW, MY ONLY PROBLEM IS YOU!
I DON'T CARE ANYMORE!

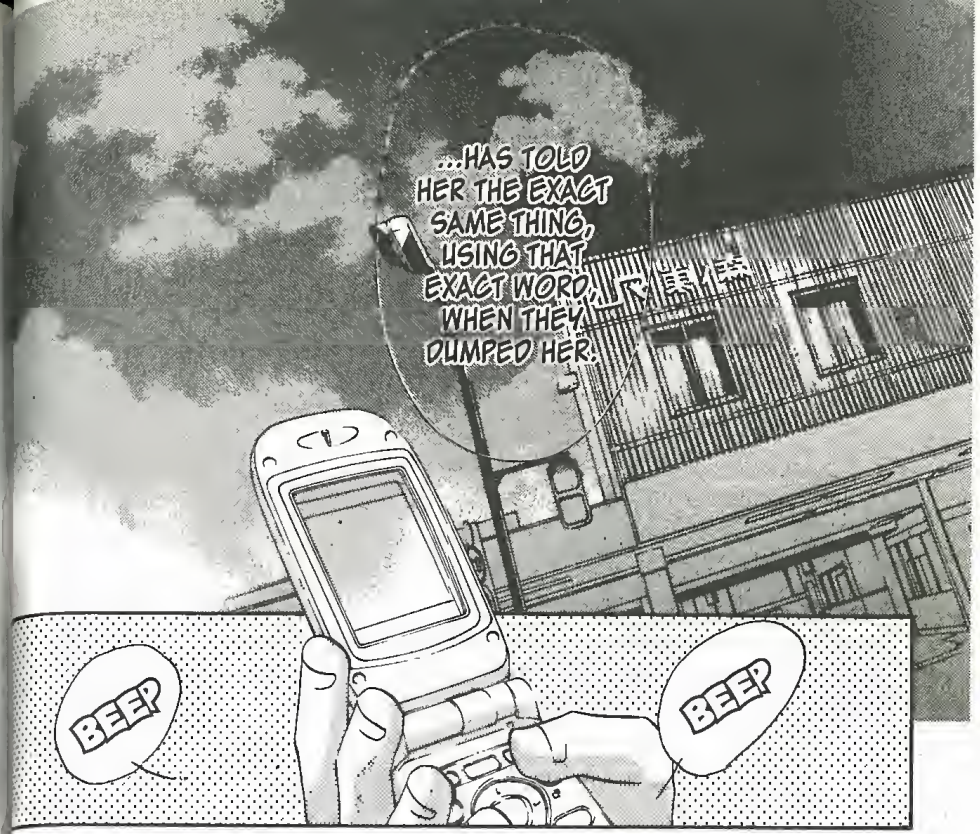
AH-HA!
HEY, YABE!
YOU CUTTING CLASS, TOO?
OOPH!
YABE!
WHY I OUGHTA --!

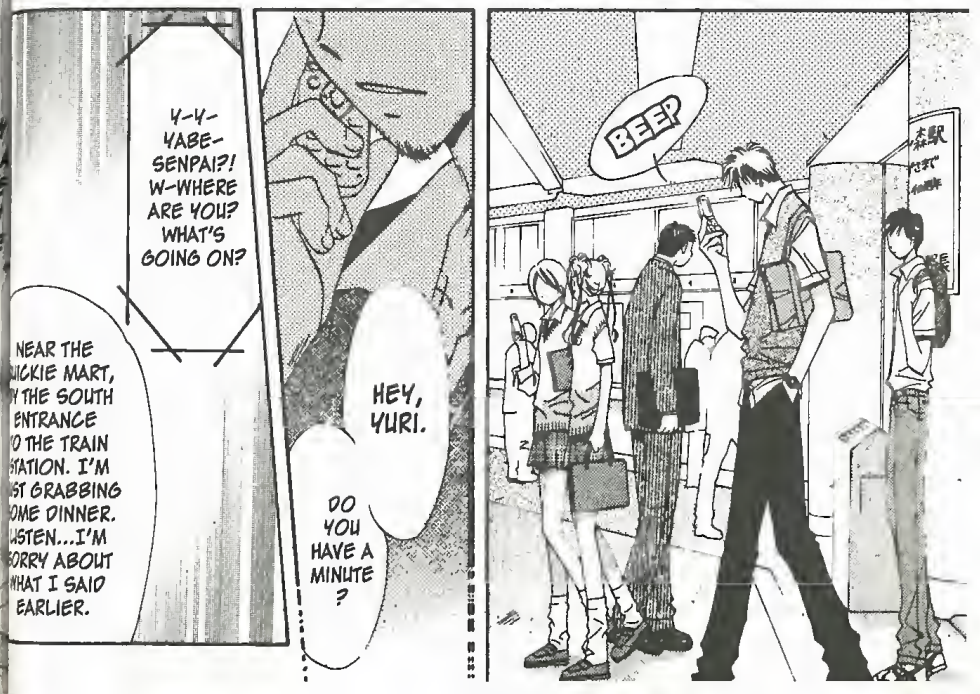
HOW COULD YOU MAKE HER CRY LIKE THAT?!
DUDE, THOSE WERE JUST HER ALLERGIES!
I TOLD HER TO NOT BE SO "HEAVY."
WHY WOULD YOU SAY SOMETHING SO CRUEL?
SMOOTH MOVE, YABE. THAT PHRASE IS TOTALLY TABOO AROUND YURI.
WHAT?
I SAID HER FEELINGS FOR ME WERE TOO "HEAVY."
YOU DID?
SHE'S TOUGH 99% OF THE TIME, BUT YOU STRUCK HER ACHILLES HEEL.
What are you doing here?
KAGURA-ZAKA?
"YOU'RE TOO... HEAVY...!"
ALMOST EVERY SINGLE BOYFRIEND SHE'S EVER HAD...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
... MOTOKI?


IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU...
I WASN'T TRYING TO BE MEAN WHEN I SAID THAT, YURI.
THAT? N-NO--NO! IT WASN'T WHAT IT LOOKED LIKE, I SWEAR!
IT WAS AN ALLERGIC REACTION!

"ALMOST EVERY SINGLE BOYFRIEND SHE'S EVER HAD HAS TOLD HER THE EXACT SAME THING...WHEN THEY DUMPED HER."

...HANDLE ANY KIND OF MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP ANYMORE.
I CAN'T...
"YOU, WHO WERE MORE DEEPLY IMMERSED IN A HURTFUL LOVE AFFAIR THAN ANYONE I'VE EVER KNOWN.




Y-Y-YABE-SENPAI?! W-WHERE ARE YOU? WHAT'S GOING ON?
NEAR THE UICKIE MART, Y THE SOUTH ENTRANCE O THE TRAIN TATION. I'M ST GRABBING OME DINNER. ISTEN...I'M ORRY ABOUT HAT I SAID EARLIER.
HEY, YURI.
DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE ?
BEEP

I JUST DON'T HAVE IT IN ME.
"I DON'T CARE ABOUT YOU, OR WHETHER YOU LIVE OR DIE!"
SENPAI ...
...I'M NOT KANAKO-SAN.
I MEANT IT WHEN I SAID I WOULD NEVER HURT YOU.
SO, MOTOKO TOLD HER...
Nobody but her knows the truth.
IF YOU THINK YOU NEED HELP, I WANT TO BE THE ONE YOU CAN LEAN ON.
NO MATTER WHAT TIME IT IS OR WHERE YOU ARE, IF YOU CALL ME, I WILL COME TO YOU.
"I NEVER LOVED YOU, YABE! NOT EVEN A LITTLE!"
MY WOUNDS...
OKAY THEN...
I'M CALLING. COME HERE. NOW.
...THEY NEVER HEAL, NEVER CLOSE ALL THE WAY.
HUH?
HANG ON. I'LL BE THERE AS FAST AS MY FEET CAN PEDAL.
INSTANT ANSWER

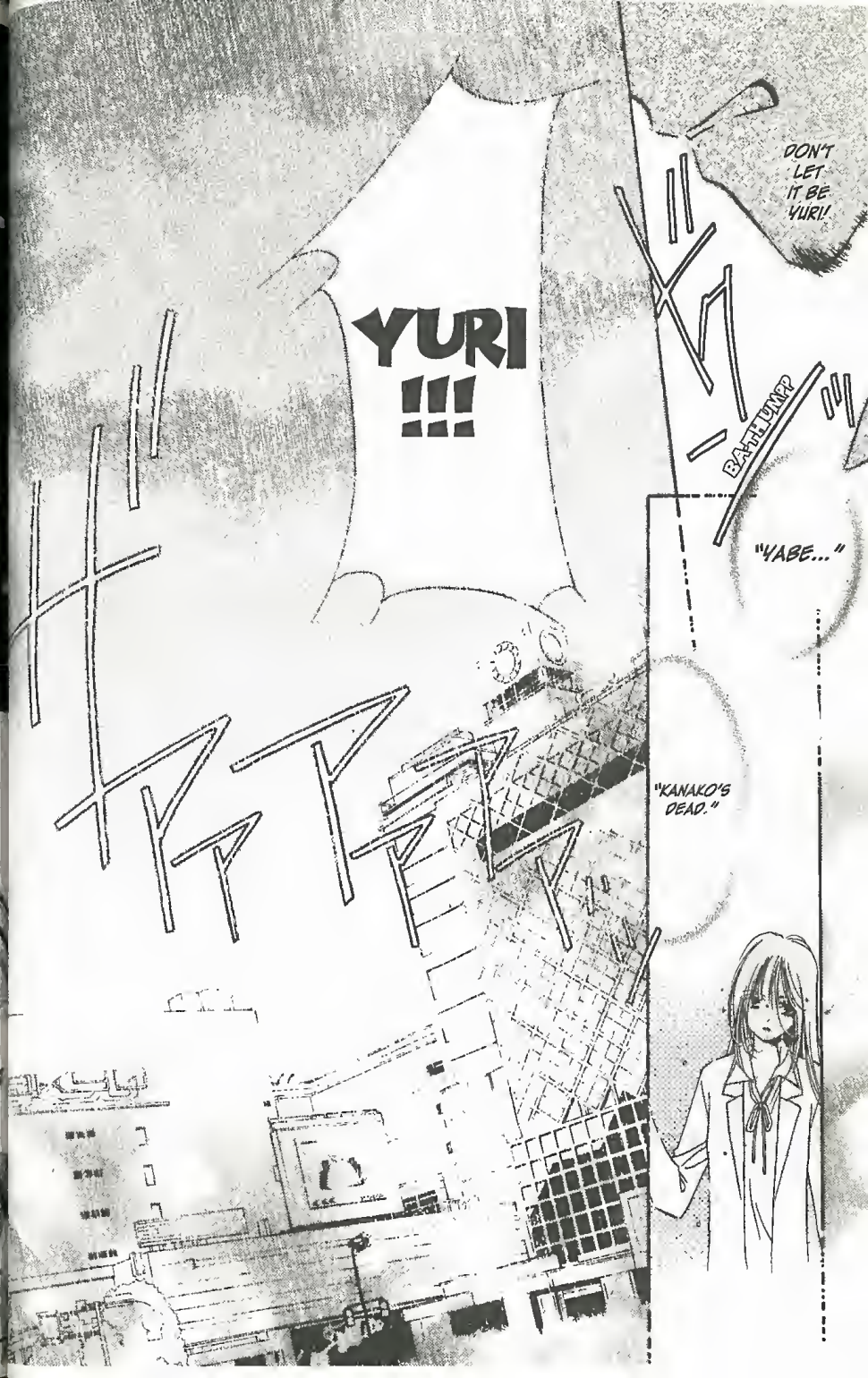
I HOPE IT'S NOT ANOTHER DISASTER.
NO DOUBT.
YURI PRACTICALLY CHUCKS HER WHOLE LIFE AWAY FOR THESE JERKS.
I KNOW. YOU'D THINK THEY'D MILK IT FOR ALL IT'S WORTH RATHER THAN DUMP HER.
WELL, IF SHE WANTS A REAL RELATION-SHIP...
UH-OH!

rumble
rumble
IS SHE SERIOUS ...?
BEEP
BEEP, BEEP
HEY, WAIT!
YURI!
HM?
WHERE ARE YOU GOING, NEE-CHAN?
WHAT?
Aw, man...
LIKELY.
NEW BOY-FRIEND?
BE BACK LATER!
DON'T NEED IT.
WAIT A SEC!
TAKE AN UMBRELLA--IT'S START-ING TO RAIN!

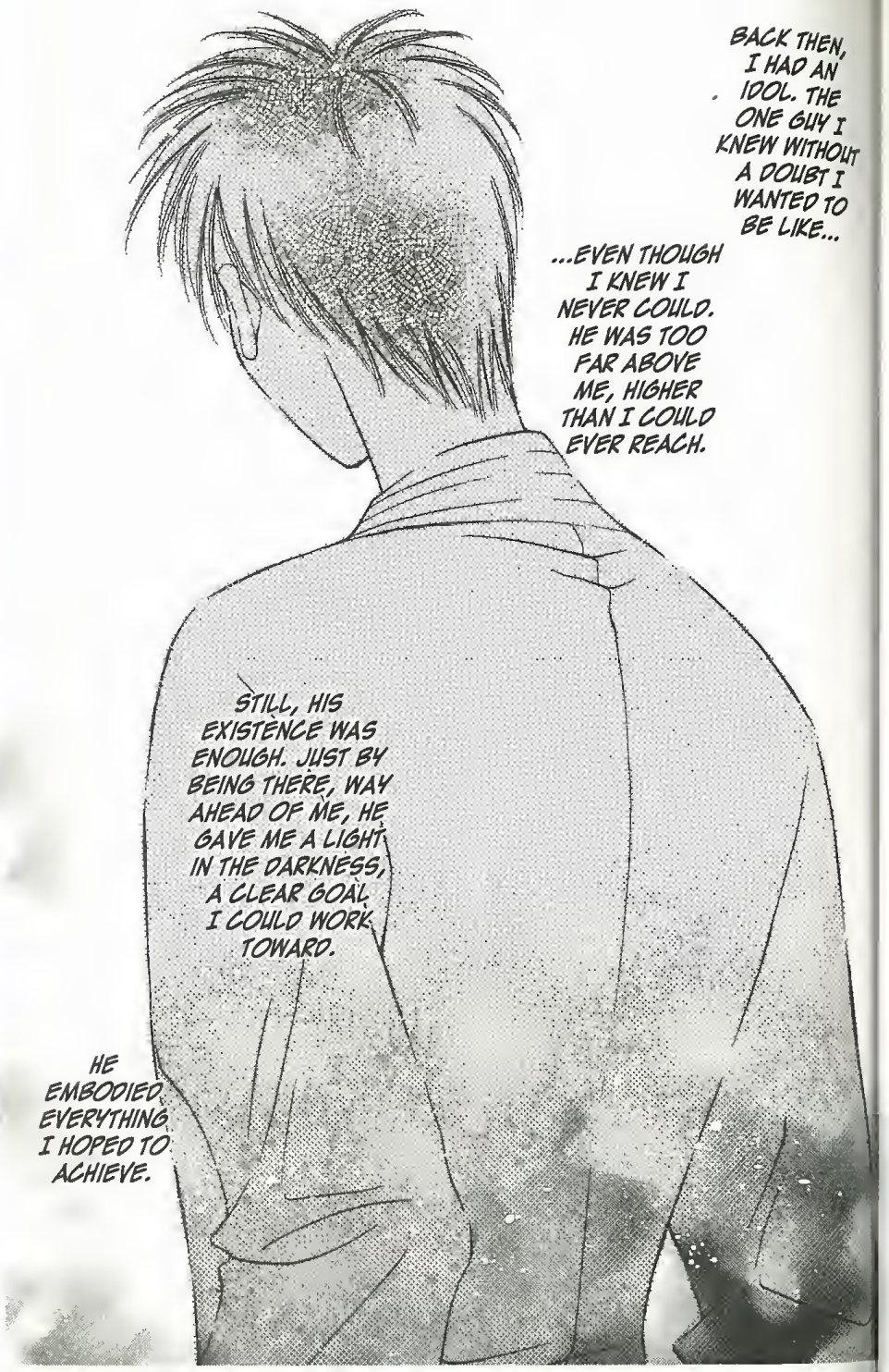
SHE CAN'T! SHE JUST CAN'T!
HUH? WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YABE?
'SCUSE ME.
EXCUSE ME...!
HEY, WHAT IF IT WAS YURI IN THAT ACCI-DENT?
DON'T BE STUPID.
"HANG ON. I'LL BE THERE AS FAST AS MY FEET CAN PEDAL."
OH, GOD... NO!
PLEASE. IT CAN'T BE...
NO MATTER WHAT TIME IT IS...
...OR WHERE YOU ARE...IF YOU CALL ME, I WILL COME TO YOU.

YABE...
...SHE NEEDS A GUY WHO'LL BE MAN ENOUGH...
...TO TRULY ACCEPT HER ALMOST SUICIDAL DEDICATION TO HIM. THAT'S GOTTA BE RARE, DON'T YOU THINK?
WEEOOO
WEEOOO
WEEOOO
NOT THAT I CARE EITHER WAY, BUT WOULD YOU TWO QUIT FOLLOWING ME?
WAS THERE A CRASH?
A GIRL RIDING A BICYCLE GOT HIT BY A CAR.
SOME-BODY SAID SHE LOOKED LIKE A HIGH-SCHOOL KID.
WHAT'S HE DOING STANDING AROUND IN THE RAIN?
DID YOU HEAR THE SIRENS? THERE WAS AN ACCI-DENT AT THE CORNER.
HEY, THERE'S YABE.

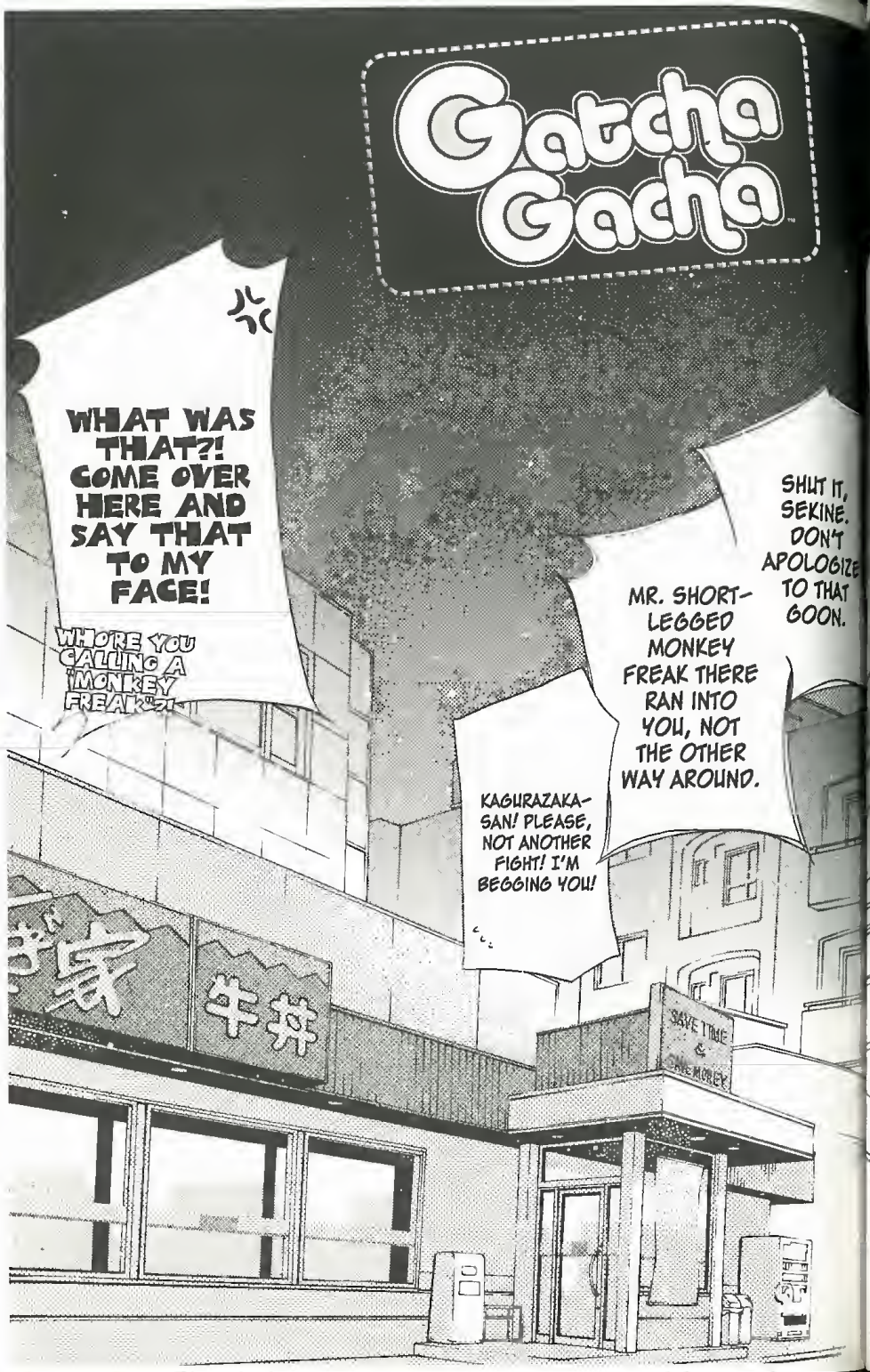
HERE.
huff
huff
huff
SORRY I'M LATE.
I KINDA... HUFF... TOOK A TUMBLE.
huff... huff...
...I SAID I'D COME, AND I CAME.


YURI !!!
DON'T LET IT BE YURI!
BA-THUMP
"YABE..."
"KANAKO'S DEAD."

EXCUSE ME! HAS ANYONE SEEN AN INJURED HIGH SCHOOL GIRL AROUND HERE?!
Um, Senpai... let's get outta here. Quickly.
She ran into my car!
WAAAH!
Ah ha ha ha ha!
I TOLD HIM I WAS FINE, BUT HE INSISTED ON CALLING AN AMBU--
--LAA-ANCE ...!
WHAAAAA?!
OH, MY GOD! EEEK!
UM... SENPAI?
YABE-SENPAI?
What's the deal?
YOU...
...ARE SO WONDERFULLY IDIOTIC.
WHAT?!
Anybody know where the girl I hit went? Anybody...?
Umm... THAT ISN'T EXACTLY COMFORTING, SEKINE.
Don't give up! Fight! Fight!
D-DON'T WORRY, SENPAI, IT'S NOT OVER!
THEY AREN'T OFFICIALLY GOING OUT WITH EACH OTHER YET!
Is this the end for Hirao?!
I'm an idiot?


BACK THEN, I HAD AN IDOL. THE ONE GUY I KNEW WITHOUT A DOUBT I WANTED TO BE LIKE...
...EVEN THOUGH I KNEW I NEVER COULD. HE WAS TOO FAR ABOVE ME, HIGHER THAN I COULD EVER REACH.
STILL, HIS EXISTENCE WAS ENOUGH. JUST BY BEING THERE, WAY AHEAD OF ME, HE GAVE ME A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS, A CLEAR GOAL I COULD WORK TOWARD.
HE EMBODIED EVERYTHING I HOPED TO ACHIEVE.

snore...
Yo, dude. Try doing some work for once.


Gatcha Gacha
WHAT WAS THAT?! COME OVER HERE AND SAY THAT TO MY FACE!
WHO'RE YOU CALLING A "MONKEY FREAK"?!
KAGURAZAKA-SAN! PLEASE, NOT ANOTHER FIGHT! I'M BEGGING YOU!
MR. SHORT-LEGGED MONKEY FREAK THERE RAN INTO YOU, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.
SHUT IT, SEKINE. DON'T APOLOGIZE TO THAT GOON.
SAVE TIME & SAVE MONEY

OH, MY GOSH, I'M SO SORRY!
I KNOW YOU'RE HUNGRY.
MIGHT AS WELL EAT UP.
I THOUGHT HE'D BE AROUND FOREVER AND EVER...
HERE YOU GO!
BUT, MR. KAWA-MURA... SENSEI...
THE LONGER OUR BODIES ARE DEPRIVED OF NOURISHMENT, THE MORE SULLEN AND LISTLESS WE BECOME.
OW, DAMMIT! WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING, FOUR-EYES!
THAT FOOD SURE TOOK A LONG TIME COMING, KONNO.

Dammit!
SINCE WHEN AM I YOUR UNDERLING?
Besides, I'm eating.
SHUT IT. UNDERLINGS TAKE OUT THE TRASH AND DON'T COMPLAIN..
WAIT... DID YOU JUST CALL ME TRASH?!
I'M NOT YOUR UNDER-LING!
So was I!
UM... EXCUSE ME, SIRS. WOULD YOU PLEASE --?
TRASH
I'M LOSING COUNT OF ALL THE FIGHTS YOU STARTED THAT I HAD TO BAT CLEAN-UP ON.
SLURP
IT'S GETTING TO BE A REAL DRAG, MOTOKO, SO KNOCK IT OFF.
yammer
YEAH, SORRY ABOUT ALL THIS. WE'LL TAKE IT OUTSIDE.

THAT'S IT, BITCH! LET'S YOU AND ME DANCE!
IF YOU CAN KEEP ANY CONVERSATION ON TRACK WITH THAT RUCKUS GOING ON, I'LL BE IMPRESSED.
SENSEI, THERE'S SOMETHING I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TELL YOU.
WHO DO YOU THINK? THE ONLY APE WITH A PIZZA FACE HERE IS YOU, MAGILLA!
...AND I'LL LET MY UNDERLING BUST YOUR NOSE FOR ME.
SIC 'IM, HABE!
Kagura-zaka-san, stop!
YOU 'N' ME? HA! YOU'RE NOT WORTH MY TIME. TELL YOU WHAT... STEP OUTSIDE, MONKEY BOY...
IT'S BEEN ON MY MIND FOR A WHILE. I WISH SOMETHING COULD DISTRACT ME...
OH DEAR! OH DEAR! OH DEAR!

A Child Called "IT": three-volume set. Non-fiction.

It's about a boy who's subjected to all sorts of inhuman, insane tortures—and by his own mother no less. The gruesome tale follows him from his youth all the way to his becoming a normal adult.

...Now that I think about it, all of my recommendations are going to be non-fiction because non-fiction is the only thing I've been reading lately. Hmm, I wonder why. A little while back, there was this FBI-profiling craze happening, and I read so many criminology and profiling books (all non-fiction, of course), I could probably write a manga or three on the subject, easily.

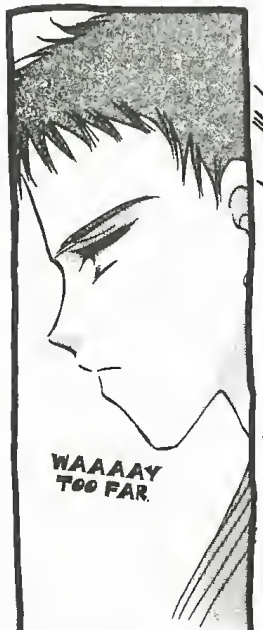
You know, I think non-fiction is all that can hold my interest anymore. Maybe it's a sign I'm getting old.

Oh, but I do still read Yoshinori Shimizu's writing. I love his stuff.

YABE-SENPAI.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT. IS IT REALLY YABE?

OH, HELL NO!
WHO CARES ABOUT OUTSIDE?! I'M TAKING YOU DOWN RIGHT HERE, RIGHT--
NO, DUDE, WE'RE GOING OUTSIDE. WE'VE INTERRUPTED EVERYONE'S MEAL LONG ENOUGH AS IT IS.
WE SHOULD AT LEAST HAVE THE COURTESY TO LET THEM GET BACK TO THEIR FOOD, DON'T YOU THINK?
AUGK! WAIT A... URK... MINUTE!
SORRY, MAN. IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL. YOU'RE A VICTIM OF CIRCUM-STANCE.
The she-devil is toxic to all!
LET... NGHH... GO!
HUH?
... SENPAI ?
Dammit, leggo!!
Kagurazaka-san! You have better manners than that!
MUNCH
CHOMP SLURP
KONNO! ISN'T THAT...?
UM, DID YABE-SENPAI JUST SMILE ...?
YUP. HE MAY WHINE ABOUT BRAWLING, BUT HE GETS A KICK OUT OF IT.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME.
K-KONNO ...?
UM...
WHO IS THAT?
YABE'S LONG-LOST BOY-FRIEND.
HE IS NOT.
Stop making up such dirty lies!
...'S ONE OF THE BOYS FROM YABE-SENPAI'S JUNIOR HIGH ENDO TEAM!
YOU'VE SURE ...
...CHANGED A LOT SINCE I LAST SAW YOU.
...'S VOICE WAS SO QUIET, SO EMOTIONLESS...
...BUT HIS EYES LOOKED SO LONELY.
...THE WORDS "LONG-LOST BOYFRIEND" POPPED BACK INTO MY HEAD, AND...NO. THAT'S JUST SO WRONG. ON SO MANY LEVELS!
LOOKS LIKE SHE JUST ABOUT HAS YOU BRAIN-WASHED, MURO!
Even if this is a shojo manga...
THE INSTANT THAT THOUGHT CROSSED MY MIND...
Ah-ha!
THERE YOU ARE, HIRAO-SENPAI.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT HERE?
SHE WHAT?!
OH, UM ...
I WANTED TO SEE YOU ABOUT SOME-THING.



GAAAAAH!! You would not believe how hard this guy is for me to draw! *Rrrrrg!* I've never been any good at drawing narrow, almond-shaped eyes like his. Never. I thought that adding him here would be good practice: increasing the repertoire of guy-types I can draw (er, well, or add a third type, anyway...right now I can draw ugly guys and not-ugly guys. That's it.). That plan didn't work. He's still really, really freakin' hard to draw.

However, whining that he's too difficult to draw and just kinda skipping over the poor guy really seems like wimping out to me. So, I'm going to suck it up and fight it out...even though it's driving me nuts. More *rrrrrg.*

His sister goes to Meirin High, too. She might show up sometime in the future. And she's probably the same physical type as her little brother.

YABE! GLAD TO SEE YOU DECIDED TO JOIN US! IF I EVER CATCH YOU ANYWHERE NEAR A MAH-JONGG PARLOR AGAIN, I'LL GET YOU KICKED OUT OF SCHOOL SO FAST YOUR HEAD WILL SPIN!
Get straight home after school!!
YOU NEED A BETTER HOBBY, SENSEI. GOING TO HEALTH SPAS, EXPECTING THEM TO FIX THE IMPOSSIBLE, ISN'T THE "IN" THING ANY MORE. AND SPENDING YOUR DAYS OBSESSING OVER ME MAKES GIRLS THINK YOU'RE WEIRD!
No wonder students snicker behind your back.
WHAT--?! HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT I DO WITH MY TIME?
Whoa! It's true?!
HM?

OH, MY GOSH! SENPAI, ARE YOU OKAY?
Whoa... head rush.
Is it anemia...?
NO... I'M FINE. TELL ME, WHAT DID YOU WANT TO SEE ME ABOUT?
sigh...
I WANTED TO SEE YOU ABOUT SOMETHING
I JUST WANTED TO SEE YOU
Not quite what she said..
I WANTED TO ASK YOU ABOUT YABE-SENPAI.
Um... eh... eh...

...YOU KNEW WHAT YABE-SENPAI WAS LIKE BACK WHEN HE STILL PRACTICED KENDO.
SO, I THOUGHT MAYBE ...
YOU'RE GOOD FRIENDS WITH YABE-SENPAI, RIGHT?
Of course it'd be about Yabe.
OH. RIGHT. OKAY.

HARD TO BELIEVE A SLACKER LIKE YABE-SENPAI USED TO BE A WARRIOR.
REALLY?
YEAH, BECAUSE KONNO'S KENDO KATA--HIS FIGHTING FORM--IS JUST LIKE YABE'S.
Earning the adoration of underclassmen and everything...
WAS YABE-SENPAI REALLY AS GOOD AS THEY SAY?
YOU BETTER BELIEVE HE WAS.
YABE WAS SO GOOD, IT WAS FRIGHTENING.
THAT STONE-FACED DUDE? YEAH, I KNOW HIM.
SATOSHI KONNO. HE'S CAPTAIN OF THE JUNIOR VARSITY KENDO TEAM AT GAHOU JR. HIGH.
HE'S THE CAPTAIN?
So that makes him, two years younger than Yabe-senpai
'S WICKED OO. ONE OF E KIDS ON OLD TEAM RRED WITH IN THE LAST URNAMENT O KONNO ORE HIM APART.
HUH?
WHEN HE WALKED OFF WITH THE GRAND PRIZE FOR INDIVIDUAL SPARRING AT EVERY TOURNAMENT HE COMPETED IN, NO ONE WAS SURPRISED.
SPEED. POWER. BALANCE. TIMING.
HE WAS WELL BEYOND THE TYPICAL JUNIOR HIGH STUDENT IN ALL FOUR CATEGORIES.
WOW.
O THOSE NARROW YES OF S AREN'T UST FOR SHOW!
I NEVER REALLY UNDERSTOOD WHAT THEY MEANT WHEN THEY CALLED SOMEONE A "BORN ATHLETE" UNTIL I SAW HIM FIGHT.
HIRAO-SENPAI?

SENPAI, WHY DID YOU QUIT KENDO?
EH. WHETHER WE'RE DIRECT OR NOT, WE'LL STILL GET TO THE SAME QUESTION.
You know... maybe start with "Hello, how are you?"
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BROACH SENSITIVE SUBJECTS, COULD YOU AT LEAST TRY TO BE A LITTLE MORE DELICATE?
WELL, THAT WAS DIRECT.
SO YOUR IDEA OF A "REGULAR JOE"...
JOKES ARE LOST ON HIM.
That should've gotten at least a chuckle.
CRAP. I FORGOT.
MAJOR ERROR
WHY DID YOU QUIT KENDO?
NO REASON, REALLY. GUESS I JUST WANTED TO BE A "REGULAR JOE" AGAIN!

NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRIED...
...I COULD NEVER REACH HIS LEVEL OF EXPERTISE.
I DIDN'T STAND A CHANCE THEN...
DO I...
...STAND ONE NOW?
...DO I...
MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED HIRAO-SENPAI AFTER ALL.
GLOOOOM
どよーん
Umm...
OH, BOY.
.....

IT ALL STARTED WHEN SHE MADE YOU MISS THE SPRING TOURNAMENT LAST YEAR.
EVERY-THING FELL APART.
...HER FAULT. ISN'T IT?
ALL DUE TO HER INFLUENCE.
YOU WERE STRONGER THAN EVERYBODY, YET YOU PUT DOWN YOUR SHINAI AND WALKED AWAY, CHANGING YOUR LIFE BEYOND ALL RECOGNITION. ALL BECAUSE OF A GIRL.
SO DON'T TAKE IT TOO HARD WHEN I TELL YOU...
I ALSO KNOW YOU STILL LOOK UP TO ME EVEN AFTER EVERY-THING.
LOOK, KONNO. I LIKE YOU. YOU'RE A GOOD GUY, AND I RESPECT HOW HARD YOU WORKED TO GET WHERE YOU ARE.
YOU DENIED IT THEN ...
...BUT WE ALL KNEW SOMETHING HAPPENED AT THE KAGURAZAKA HOUSE. SHE---
IT'S SO EASY TO LOSE OUR WAY.

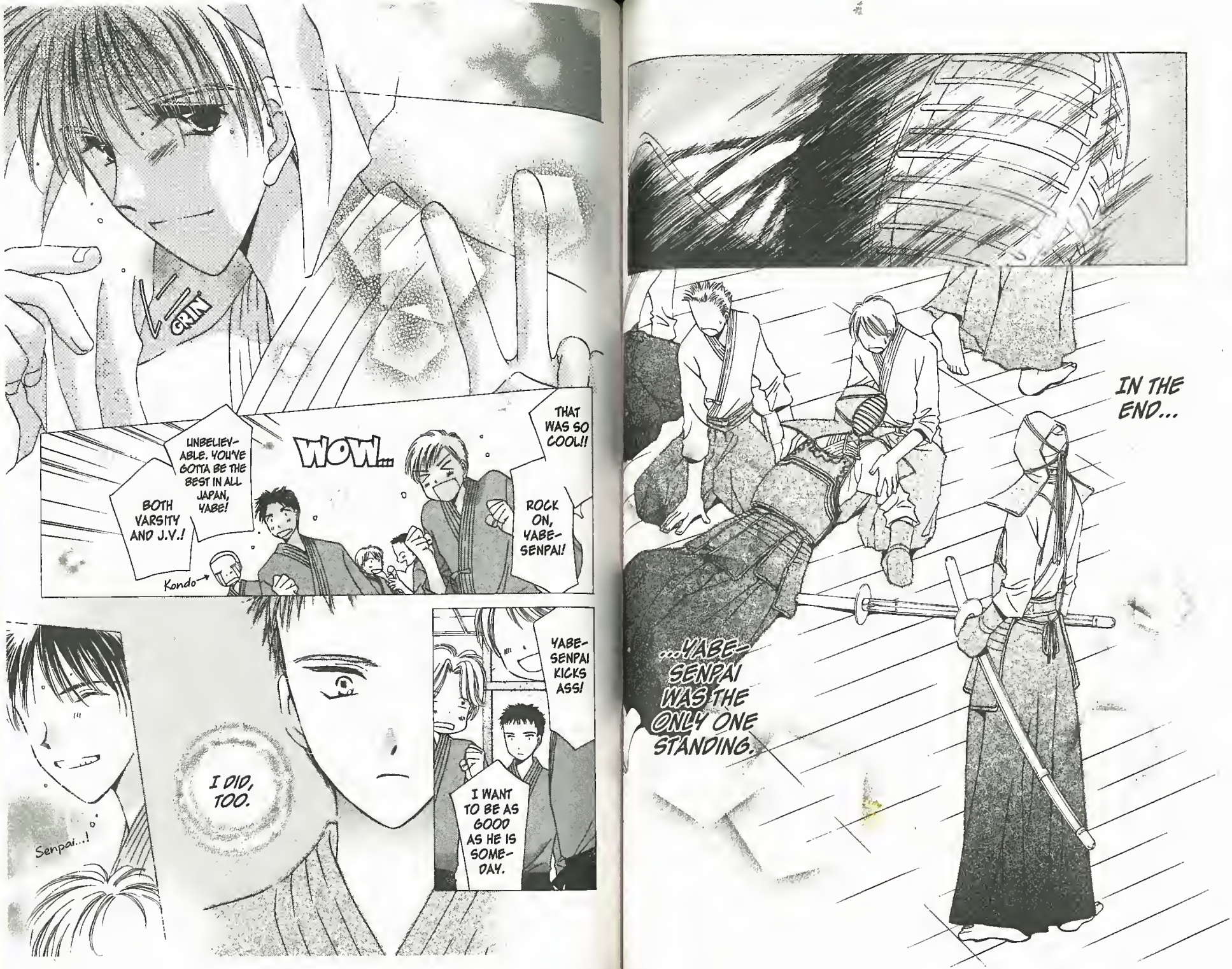
Gross misrepre-sentation!
NOT DAILY!
...RANDOMLY PICKS FIGHTS WITH WHICHEVER THUG HAPPENS TO CROSS HIS PATH...DATES MULTIPLE WOMEN SIMULTANEOUSLY... SEVERAL OF WHOM ARE OF DUBIOUS MORAL FIBER...
...AND ROUNDS IT ALL OUT WITH DAILY VISITS TO MAH-JONGG PARLORS, PACHINKO PALACES, AND OTHER SHADY ESTABLISHMENTS?
...IS SOME-ONE WHO CONSTANTLY FAKES ILLNESS SO HE CAN SHOW UP LATE AND LEAVE EARLY...
SOME-ONE HELP ME. LEASE ?
FULL CIRCLE!
NOW: WHY DID YOU QUIT KENDO?
...HOW THE HELL DID YOU KNOW ALL THAT, ANYWAY?
k-klak k-klak
EH. MY OLDER SISTER IS AN UPPER CLASSMAN AT MEIRIN HIGH.
YOU'RE FAMOUS THERE. RUMORS ABOUT YOU FLY QUITE FREELY.
...I DUNNO.
I GUESS I JUST DIDN'T HAVE THE HEART FOR IT ANYMORE.
BUT THAT'S...

TH-THANK YOU FOR THE--
ACK!
GOOD GOD, YOU'RE PATHETIC! THE WEAKEST FLOWER IN A FIELD OF PANSIES!
THAT MATCH MADE ME EMBARRASSED TO HAVE EVER GRADUATED FROM THIS SCHOOL.
POOR TAJIMA-SENPAI. THAT HAS GOT TO HURT.
He's always here when the coach isn't.
HE CALLS IT "TRAINING," BUT HE'S JUST LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO PICK ON.
Shut up, loser.
I'm sorr--ow!
HE PROBABLY GOT INTO ANOTHER FIGHT WITH HIS GIRLFRIEND. HE ALWAYS TAKES IT OUT ON US WHEN HE DOES.
KONDO-SENPAI IS SUCH A JERK.
KONDO-SENPAI...
HE'S BEEN GRAND CHAMPION AT THE NATIONAL INTER-HIGH TOURNAMENT, AND HE'S CAPTAINED THE TOUGOU HIGH TEAM TO VICTORY TWO YEARS RUNNING.
SAD, BUT TRUE.
HE'S PRETTY GOOD ON THE MAT, EVEN IF HE IS A TOTAL ASS.
IS HE EVEN A REAL ALUM?

...TO BACK THE HELL OFF.
MY LIFE IS NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
"YABE-SENPAI IS SO AWESOME!"
"I WANT TO BE AS GOOD AS HE IS SOMEDAY."
...!

WHY DON'T I GET THE COACH? HE'LL PUT A---
I'LL BEAT HIM.
I'M WAY BETTER THAN HIM.
IT'S THAT POCK-FACED PIG WHO DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE.
THAT DAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME...
...I SAW SOMEONE...
...WITH TRUE BLOODLUST IN HIS EYES.

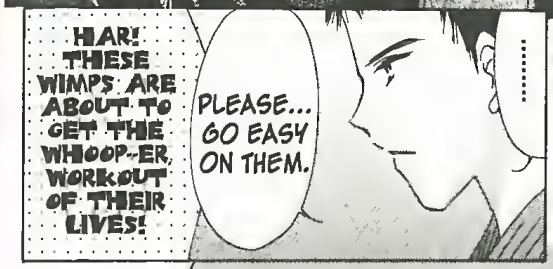
MAY I HAVE THE HONOR...
...OF SPARRING WITH YOU?
賀邦
矢
AT THAT TIME, THEY WERE BOTH GRAND CHAMPIONS IN INDIVIDUAL SPARRING.
BUT KONDO HAD WON AT THE HIGHER VARSITY LEVEL, WHILE YABE-SENPAI WAS STILL ONLY J.V.
...No way...
YABE-SENPAI DIDN'T HAVE A PRAYER.
BODY WAS LOCKING POOR AT ALL.
YOU'RE GONNA GET CREAMED.
NOT EVEN ME.
YOU'RE GOOD IN OUR CLASS-MATE, YABE-SENPAI, BUT CHALLENGING SOMEONE AS SKILLED AS KONDO-SENPAI ISN'T SMART.


GRIN
WOW...
THAT WAS SO COOL!!
ROCK ON, YABE-SENPAI!
UNBELIEV-ABLE. YOU'VE GOTTA BE THE BEST IN ALL JAPAN, YABE!
BOTH VARSITY AND J.V.!
Kondo
YABE-SENPAI KICKS ASS!
I WANT TO BE AS GOOD AS HE IS SOME-DAY.
I DID, TOO.
Senpai...!
IN THE END...
...YABE-SENPAI WAS THE ONLY ONE STANDING.

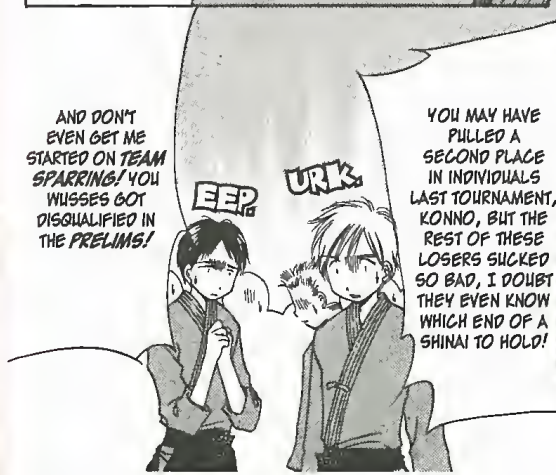
I SAW A VISION OF MYSELF STANDING WITH YOUR STRENGTH...
...AND FROM THAT MOMENT ON...
...YOU WERE MY ONLY GOAL. THE ONE IDEAL I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO MATCH.
THEN, ONE DAY, YOU JUST... DISAPPEARED.
RIGHT WHEN...
...I STARTED THINKING I MIGHT ACTUALLY STEP UP TO YOUR LEVEL.
OH!
WHAT TH--?
URK
HMM?
ISN'T HE THE SAME GUY WHO WAS AT THE RESTAURANT WITH YOUR OLD KENDO TEAMMATE THE OTHER DAY, SENPAI?
Hey, look! SEE THAT GUY OVER THERE?
KAWA-MURA-SENSEI?!
What are you doing here?!
JUST THE MAN I'M LOOKING FOR.
AH, THERE YOU ARE, YABE.
WHAAAA?! YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME?!
WOULD YOU COME DOWN HERE A SEC?
THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT.
GRAWR!
YEAH... A HOMO TEACHER.
He is not!
HE'S THE ADVISOR TO GAHOU JUNIOR HIGH'S KENDO TEAM!
HE'S A TEACHER?
ザワ..

WE USED TO BE ONE OF THE TOP THREE TEAMS IN ALL JAPAN. IT MAKES ME SICK TO SEE HOW FAR THE SCHOOL HAS FALLEN.
HE JUST GOT LUCKY A FEW TIMES, IS ALL.
EVERYBODY GOES ON AND ON ABOUT HOW HE BEAT ME THAT ONE TIME, BUT THAT WAS A FREAK ACCIDENT! NO WAY IN HELL COULD HE EVER DO IT AGAIN.
TAKE YOUR YABE AND SHOVE 'IM. HE HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH ANYTHING.
SHADDAP OVER THERE!!
Zip your lip!
BUT...WHEN WE WERE THAT GOOD, WE HAD YABE-SENPAI AS TEAM CAPTAIN...
Right?
YOU'RE OFF THE HOOK, KONNO, SINCE YOU WERE HALFWAY DECENT AT THE TOURNAMENT.
KONDO-SENPAI ...?
Loves to pick on the weak
NO MORE! YOU LOSERS ARE GETTING PUT THROUGH THE WRINGER, AND THEN SOME!
THE PROBLEM WAS I WAS TOO SOFT ON HIM!
YEEEEEEK!
ばき ばき

HEY, WHO'S THAT?
DUNNO. SOMEONE SAID HE'S AN ALUM.
YEAH. HE'S SUPPOSED TO BE FREAKIN' STRONG, TOO. WHEN HE WAS STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL, HE WAS THE NATIONAL KENDO CHAMP.
HE EVEN GOT SCOUTED BY THE NIPPON SPORT SCIENCE UNIVERSITY.

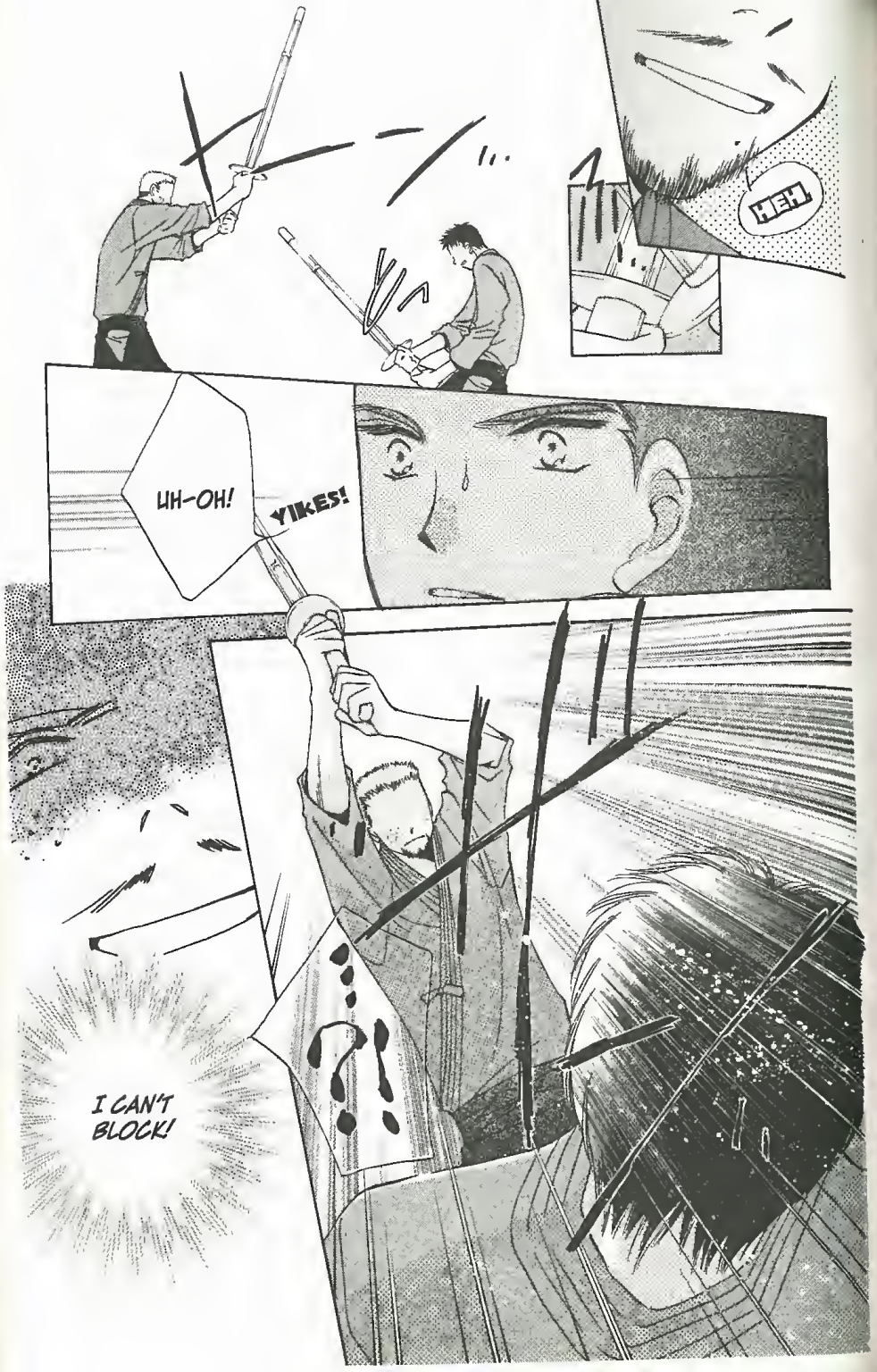

HAH! THESE WIMPS ARE ABOUT TO GET THE WHOOP-ER, WORKOUT OF THEIR LIVES!
PLEASE... GO EASY ON THEM.
.....

BWA HA HA HA HA HA HA
KONDO-SENPAI...
SORRY PACK OF PANSIES!


AND DON'T EVEN GET ME STARTED ON TEAM SPARRING! YOU WUSSES GOT DISQUALIFIED IN THE PRELIMS!
EEP.
URK.
YOU MAY HAVE PULLED A SECOND PLACE IN INDIVIDUALS LAST TOURNAMENT, KONNO, BUT THE REST OF THESE LOSERS SUCKED SO BAD, I DOUBT THEY EVEN KNOW WHICH END OF A SHINAI TO HOLD!

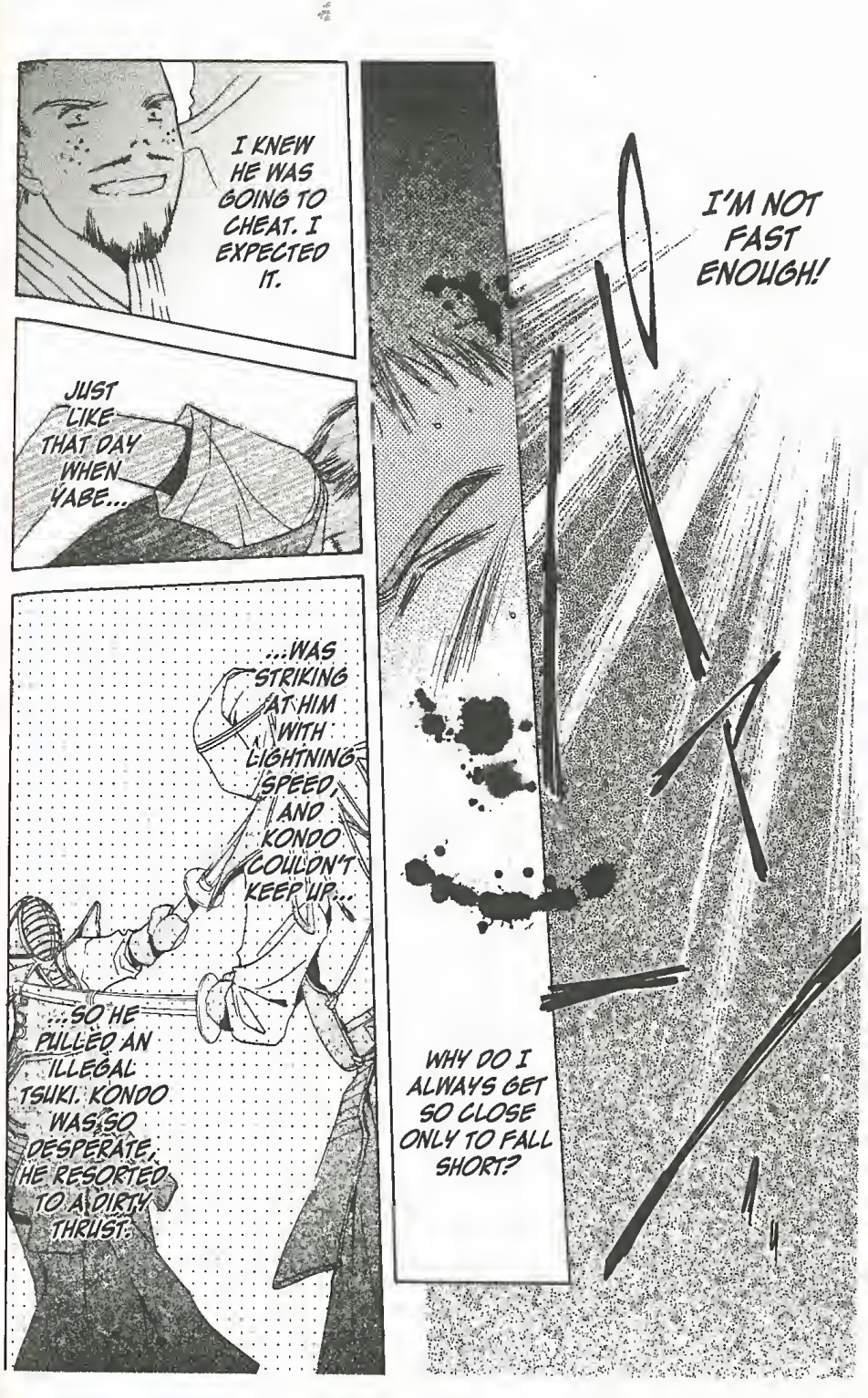
"FAILING OUT OF THE PRELIMS IS STILL EATING AT YOU, ISN'T IT?"
"I'M NOT CUT OUT TO BE CAPTAIN."
BEGIN!
"I DON'T HAVE HIS ABILITY TO INSPIRE THE TEAM."
"I CAN'T RUN THINGS THE WAY YABE-SENPAI DOES."
"I'M LIGHT YEARS BEHIND HIS SKILL LEVEL...AND NOW I DON'T EVEN HAVE HIS EXAMPLE TO HELP LEAD ME THERE."
"I'M NOT EVEN HALF THE SWORDSMAN HE WAS. MY SPEED, POWER, AND CONCENTRATION ALL PALE IN COMPARISON TO HIS."

YEH
I FAILED IN MY DUTIES AS TEAM CAPTAIN. I'M THE ONE WHO NEEDS THE MOST TRAINING, IF I AM TO LEAD MY TEAM.
ON THE CONTRARY, SENPAI, OUR DISMAL RESULTS AT THE TOURNAMENT WERE MY FAULT.
THAT'S THE KIND OF SOFTNESS I MEAN! THAT'S WHAT YABE'D DO!
"KAWAMURA-SENSEI... I CAN'T DO IT."
YOU BOYS BETTER GET A MOP TO WIPE UP THIS LOSER'S BLOOD.
I COULDN'T CARE LESS.
YOU WANT TO GO A FEW ROUNDS? FINE. WE'LL DO IT WITHOUT GEAR, TOO.


HEH.
UH-OH!
YIKES!
I CAN'T BLOCK!

IF I CAN'T FOLLOW HIM...WHERE IS THERE FOR ME TO GO?
HOLY CRAP! CHECK IT OUT!
KONNO-SENPAI'S HOLDING HIS OWN AGAINST KONDO-SENPAI.
K-KONNO!
C'MON! DON'T BACK DOWN!
THIS KID WANTS MY HEAD ON A SPIKE.
DAMN!
Hang in there! Go, man! Go!
OUR WEAPONS ARE LOCKED TOGETHER. I CAN'T SWING!
AN URAKOUSA! HE'S CHEATING!
CRAP!

DIE, YABE !!!
BUT IT DIDN'T WORK. YABE-SENPAI JUST...
WHAT --?
HUH? He dodged it?
UMM... I...
SHUT UP, YABE!
I THINK YOU SHOULD STAY DOWN FOR A BIT. YOU GOT HIT PRETTY HARD. You might have a slight concussion.
ARE YOU OKAY?
'SUP, SENPAI? STILL A ROTTEN CHEAT, I SEE.
WE GOT HERE RIGHT WHEN THAT GUY CRACKED YOU OVER THE HEAD. HE WAS GOING TO HIT YOU AGAIN, EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE ALREADY DOWN, BUT YABE-SENPAI JUMPED IN AND STOPPED IT.
BUT...
YABE-SENPAI HASN'T HELD A SHINAI IN OVER A YEAR!
...WHA ...?
YABE-SENPAI?! BUT HOW ...?!


I KNEW HE WAS GOING TO CHEAT. I EXPECTED IT.
JUST LIKE THAT DAY WHEN YABE...
...WAS STRIKING AT HIM WITH LIGHTNING SPEED, AND KONDO COULDN'T KEEP UP...
...SO HE PULLED AN ILLEGAL TSUKI. KONDO WAS SO DESPERATE, HE RESORTED TO A DIRTY THRUST.
I'M NOT FAST ENOUGH!
WHY DO I ALWAYS GET SO CLOSE ONLY TO FALL SHORT?

...HE'S...!
I HEARD YOU WERE LOOKING FOR A LITTLE MORAL SUPPORT.
Uhng!
YO, KONNO.
HEIRIN
HE'S JUST AS GOOD AS HE WAS A YEAR AGO.
Kawamura's reasoning:
WOULD YOU GO OVER AND CHAT WITH KONNO A LITTLE? HE'S GOT HIS HEART SET ON SEEING YOU AGAIN.
Just give him a little paypalk that's all he needs
The Blond Samurai
A.K.A. THE TRUTH

OH, YABE'LL BE FINE. DON'T WORRY.
GRAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!!!
BUT HE'S...

YES?
HEY, SEKINE!
Yabe-senpai's such a good guy at heart.
SENPAI, YOU'VE MADE ALL THE GIRLS CRY, NOW YOU HAVE TO TRY BOYS.
Dude, if you're going to cry, at least change your expression! Mega creepy!

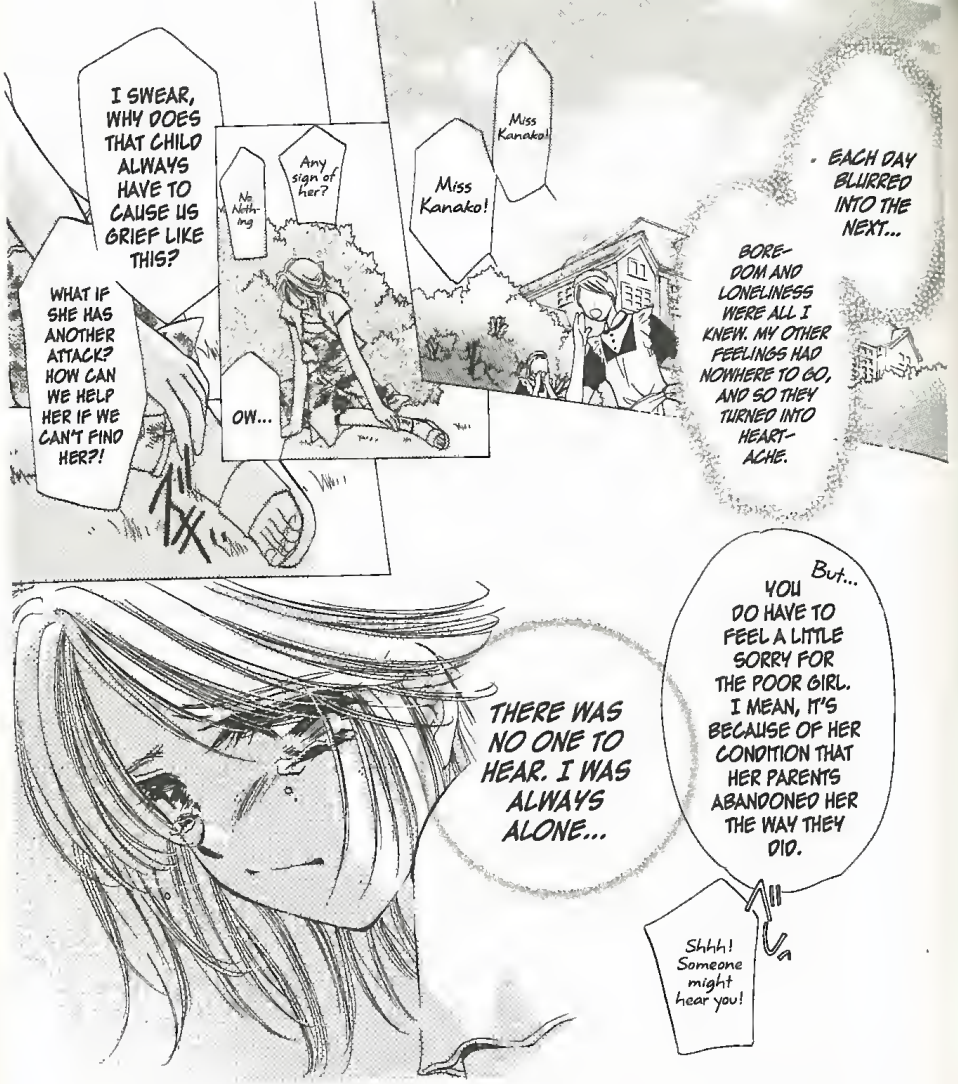
...HASN'T CHANGED. IT'S WAITING FOR ME TO REACH IT.

...HUH?

SLAP ME IF I EVER START DOING THINGS FOR OTHER PEOPLE LIKE THIS, OKAY?

MY GOAL...

Uh, guys... we're having a meeting here, remember? Anyone?
DO I EVEN WANT TO KNOW WHAT HOLE HE'S DUG HIMSELF INTO THIS TIME?
There's a really strange little relationship growing between these two...
SO, IN THE END, ALL I MANAGED TO ACCOMPLISH WAS MAKING YABE LOOK EVEN BETTER?


I SWEAR, WHY DOES THAT CHILD ALWAYS HAVE TO CAUSE US GRIEF LIKE THIS?
WHAT IF SHE HAS ANOTHER ATTACK? HOW CAN WE HELP HER IF WE CAN'T FIND HER?!
No. Nothing.
Any sign of her?
OW...
Miss Kanako!
Miss Kanako!
EACH DAY BLURRED INTO THE NEXT...
BOREDOM AND LONELINESS WERE ALL I KNEW. MY OTHER FEELINGS HAD NOWHERE TO GO, AND SO THEY TURNED INTO HEARTACHE.
THERE WAS NO ONE TO HEAR. I WAS ALWAYS ALONE...
But... YOU DO HAVE TO FEEL A LITTLE SORRY FOR THE POOR GIRL. I MEAN, IT'S BECAUSE OF HER CONDITION THAT HER PARENTS ABANDONED HER THE WAY THEY DID.
Shhh! Someone might hear you!

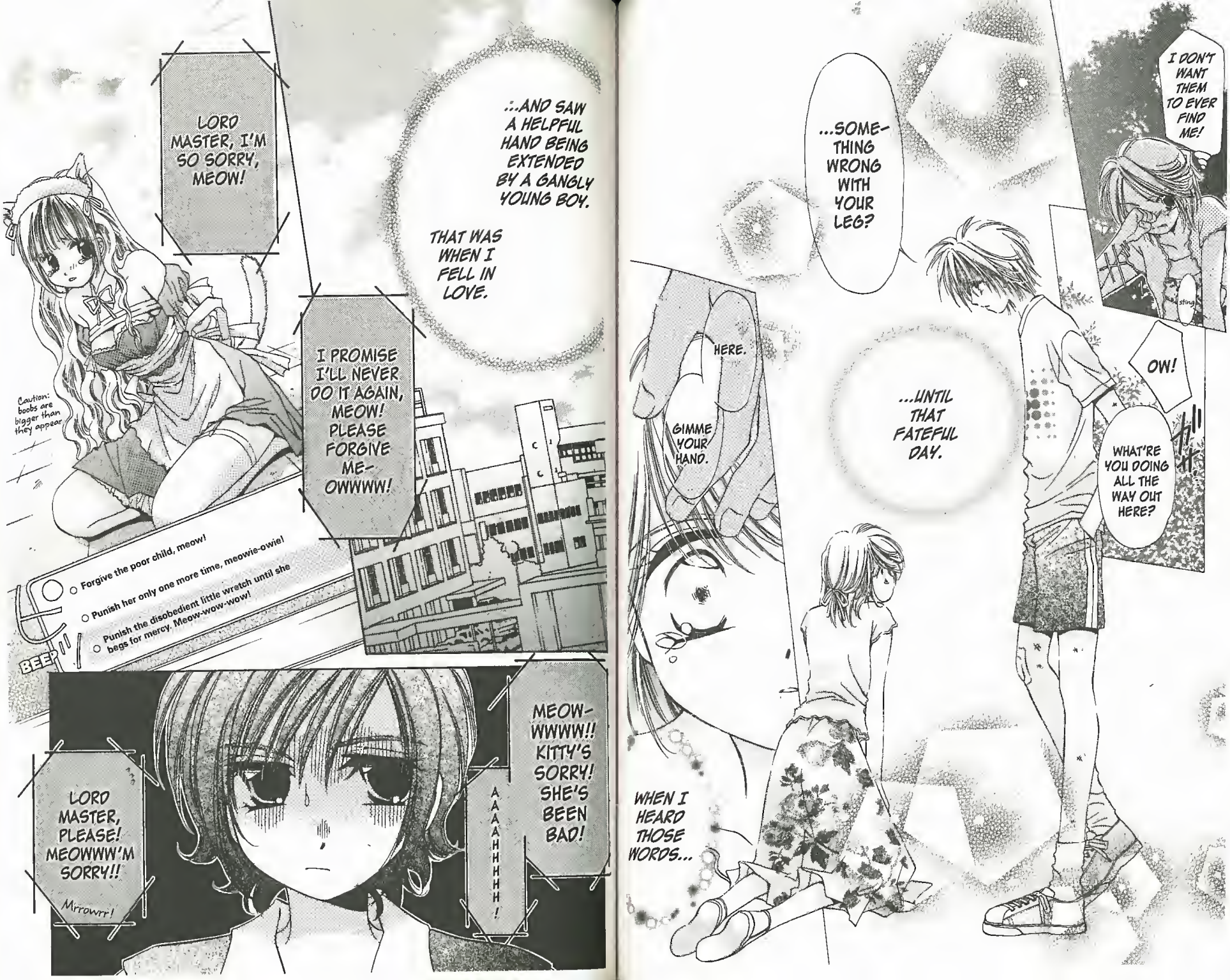
Flowers for Algernon (Fiction)

I heard about the movie version when it came out, so I decided to give the book a look-see. I'd already read one of Daniel Keyes' other books, *The Minds of Billy Milligan*, but I'd never tried *Flowers*–which is odd because it's supposed to be his most famous. I guess it's because I already had a preconceived notion about what happened in the book, so I never felt a pressing need to read it before.

But, man, does that ending make me cry. It doesn't matter how many times I read it, it still makes me bawl like an emotional preteen.

I really should have read more books like this back when I was in grade school. Really.

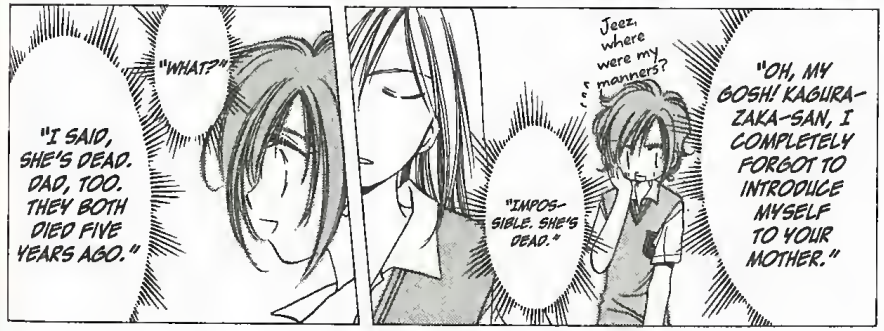
Bandit Cafe


I DON'T WANT THEM TO EVER FIND ME!
sting
OW!
WHAT'RE YOU DOING ALL THE WAY OUT HERE?
...UNTIL THAT FATEFUL DAY.
...SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOUR LEG?
HERE.
GIMME YOUR HAND.
WHEN I HEARD THOSE WORDS...
...AND SAW A HELPFUL HAND BEING EXTENDED BY A GANGLY YOUNG BOY.
THAT WAS WHEN I FELL IN LOVE.
LORD MASTER, I'M SO SORRY, MEOW!
I PROMISE I'LL NEVER DO IT AGAIN, MEOW! PLEASE FORGIVE ME- OWWWW!
Caution: boobs are bigger than they appear
Forgive the poor child, meow!
Punish her only one more time, meowie-owie!
Punish the disobedient little wretch until she begs for mercy. Meow-wow-wow!
BEEP
MEOW-WWWW!! KITTY'S SORRY! SHE'S BEEN BAD!
AAAAHHHHH!
LORD MASTER, PLEASE! MEOWWW'M SORRY!!
Mrrowrr!

THE GIRL PLAYING THAT CHEESY HENTAI GAME OVER THERE IS MOTOKO KAGURAZAKA.
MEOWWW!
FOR-GIVE ME--OWWW! I BEG YOU!
Tok
Tok
Tok
SONY
VAIO
...SHE'S THE MOST TWISTED, EVIL PERSON THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN.
KUZU-YAMA'S.
Tok
What happened to clean-ing up around here?
UM... KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN? WHOSE COMPUTER IS THAT?
I KNOW SHE'S BEAUTIFUL ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT INSIDE...
WELL, LUCKY FOR THEM I'M AROUND!
REALLY REALLY LUCKY.
YOU KNOW, I REMEMBER WHEN WE HIRED PRETTY YOUNG MAIDS TO CLEAN.
Meow
yo wow!
WEREN'T YOU HERE WHEN KUZUYAMA-SENSEI WENT ON HIS LATEST TIRADE? HE WAS UP IN ARMS ABOUT SOMEBODY INSTALLING, UM... ODD SOFTWARE ON HIS COMPUTER WITHOUT HIS APPROVAL.
WHAT?
splish
THEY WERE FIRED? BUT WHY...?
NO, I DID NOT, THANK YOU. GAWD. THEY WERE ALL FIRED WHEN I STARTED JUNIOR HIGH.
And how many times do I have to tell you I'm not gay!
OH THE HUMANITY!
WAIT...
DON'T TELL ME YOU DID STRANGE, UNSPEAKABLE THINGS TO THEM, MAKING THEM QUIT OUT OF FEAR...?!
WHO KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE POOR SOULS WHEN THIS WARPED SHE-DEVIL GOT HER HANDS ON THEM...
NO, WAIT...
...YOUR SISTER... SHE DID IT, DIDN'T SHE?
Bingo.
YOU'RE PRETTY SHARP TODAY, YURI.
KAGURAZAKA-SAN'S OLDER SISTER, KANAKO-SAN, WAS VERY... DIFFERENT.
THEY WERE SISTERS, BUT KANAKO-SAN HAD BECOME SCARILY DEVOTED TO KAGURAZAKA-SAN. SHE WAS POSSESSIVE AND JEALOUS...
THE SWITCH WAS A PRETTY BAD SHOCK TO MY SYSTEM.
Tok
Tok
Tok
ONE MORNING, I WOKE UP AND ALL THE NICE, PRETTY GIRLS HAD BEEN REPLACED BY THE BIDDY BRIGADE OF ULTIMATE WRINKLEDOM.
...RIGHT UP UNTIL SHE DIED A YEAR AGO.

IT MUST BE LONELY IN SUCH A LARGE HOUSE.
"I MAY NOT GET ALONG WITH MY TWISTED LITTLE FART OF A GRANDFATHER, BUT WE'RE THE ONLY FAMILY EITHER OF US HAS LEFT."
LOSING HER PARENTS FIVE YEARS AGO, THEN LOSING THE MAIDS SHE'D COME TO THINK OF AS SURROGATE PARENTS...
...FOLLOWED BY THE DEATH OF HER ONLY SISTER JUST TWELVE MONTHS AGO.
JUST THE TWO OF THEM...?
"BUT THE YOUNGER SERVANTS WERE ALSO REALLY KIND. ALMOST LIKE HAVING A WHOLE TROOP OF MOTHERS."
I WONDER IF, UNDER ALL HER BLUSTER...
...KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN IS REALLY JUST A VERY LONELY GIRL.

HUMPH
YEAH, IT MUST'VE SUCKED NOT TO HAVE PRETTY GIRLS AROUND TO OGLE.
Well, yeah.
THERE WAS THAT.
BUT THE YOUNGER SERVANTS WERE ALSO REALLY KIND. ALMOST LIKE HAVING A WHOLE TROOP OF MOTHERS JUST FOR MYSELF.
RIGHT AFTER I VISITED KAGURAZAKA-SAN'S HOUSE THAT ONE TIME, SHE TOLD ME...
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. I FORGOT.


"I SAID, SHE'S DEAD. DAD, TOO. THEY BOTH DIED FIVE YEARS AGO."
"WHAT?"
"IMPOS-SIBLE. SHE'S DEAD."
Jeez, where were my manners?
"OH, MY GOSH! KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN, I COMPLETELY FORGOT TO INTRODUCE MYSELF TO YOUR MOTHER."

Monrovia Public Library

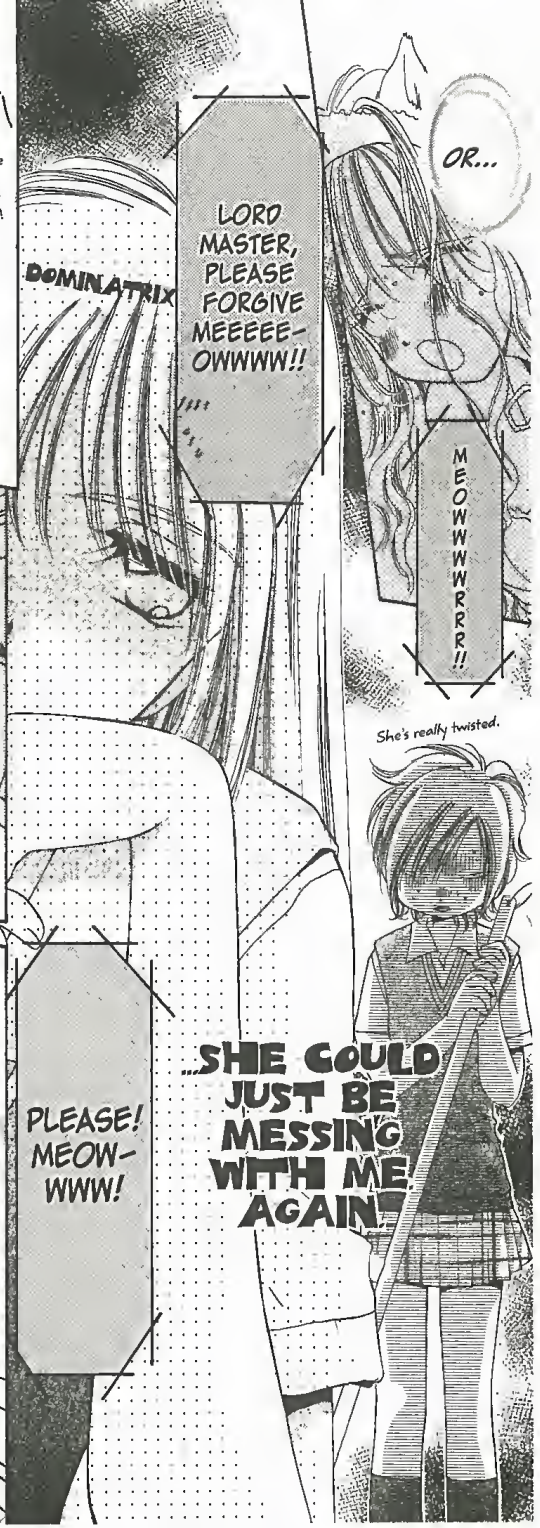
I got a whole bunch of fan letters recently, all asking the same question: "Who gets together with whom at the end?" Everybody seems to have their own favorite couplings and opinions on how they want things to turn out, but nobody wants to say they know for sure X and Y are going to get together, or A wins B in the end. (They all keep saying it's too hard to predict...)

I pretty much decided what the pairings would be by the middle of volume one. I don't think I'm going to change my mind, either.

So, who gets whom? Heh-heh. What do you think?

She totally looked like a boy when she was in elementary school. Young Motoko's developed quite the devoted following... though strangely, she's probably the most manly character in this entire manga.!

IT LOOKS LIKE MIROI-SAN HAS FINALLY STARTED TO CATCH ON.
You just lied to me again, didn't you?!
DO YOU EVER STOP FIBBING?
Jeez!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, YOU BAS-TARD!



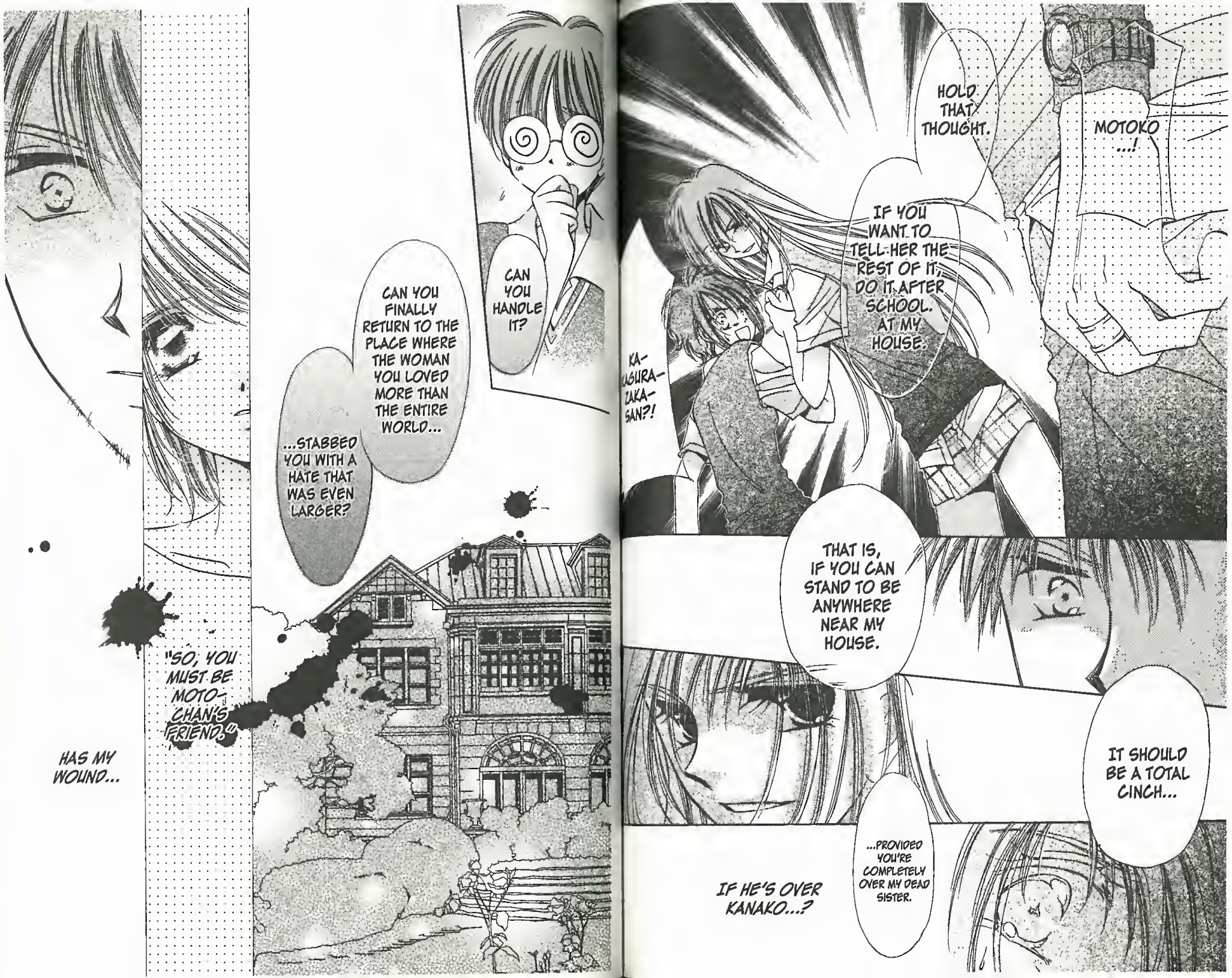
YOU SAW IT ALL, HUH?
AW, MAN! YOU SEEM TO ALWAYS CATCH ME AT MY WORST!
STRAIGHT ANSWER
YUP. FROM THE SECOND SHE SLAPPED YOU.
N-NO...THIS ISN'T THE KIND OF INJURY... THE NURSE CAN DO ANYTHING... ABOUT.
DOES IT HURT MUCH?
DO YOU NEED TO GO TO THE NURSE'S OFFICE?
WHAT? THEN WHAT DO WE DO? OHHH!
BETTER ...?
NOT BLOODY LIKELY!
YOU TWO-TIMING SLEAZE!
WELL, HE ALWAYS DID HAVE A THING FOR STRONG-WILLED GIRLS.
No matter how many times it backfires on him.
...Yikes!
SE--
--SEN-PAI!!
ARE YOU OKAY ?!
YOU AND I ARE THROUGH!
BUT, YABE-SENPAI...
Where are you all the times I'm being cool?
REALLY COOL GUYS...
...ARE THE ONES WHO CAN TAKE A HIT AND KEEP ON STRUTTING.
TO ME, YABE-SENPAI IS STILL THE COOLEST GUY EVER, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS.
WHISPER

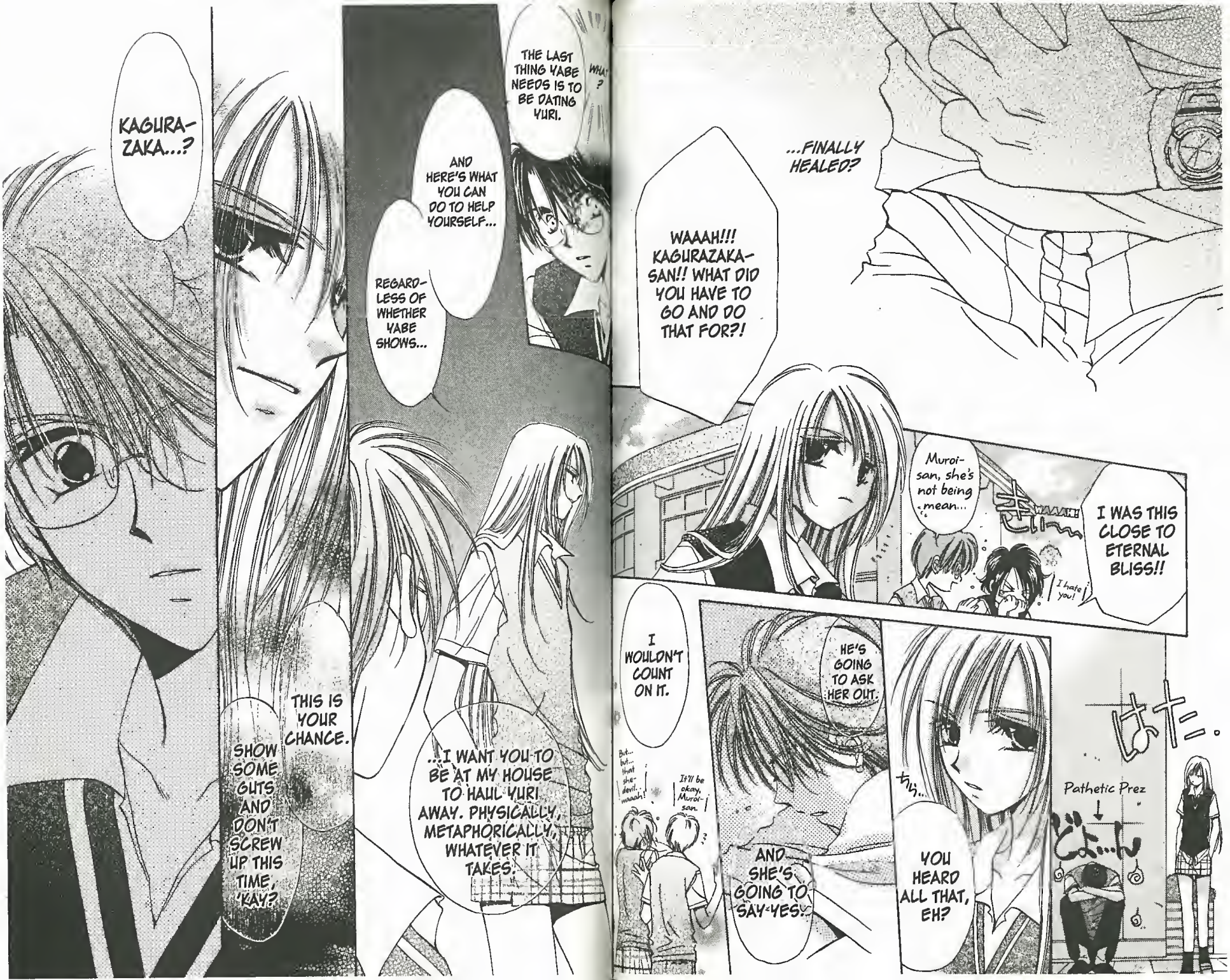
AH!
I SEE YOU'VE STARTED TO CLEAN OUT THAT BOX OF HORRORS YOU CALL A LOVE LIFE.
...WHAT?
YOU WEREN'T DATING HIM/ME IN THE FIRST PLACE!
ARE YOU GOING TO SWEEP ME OUT OF YOUR LOVE LIFE AS WELL?!
Yuri: Master of Jumping To Conclusions
THEN...
...WHY...?
RUSTLE

KASUKA-ZAKA-SAN...
Oh, my.
...THOSE TWO HAVE BEEN GETTING ALONG REALLY WELL LATELY, DON'T YOU THINK?
Nah. I just pissed off a cat.
Isn't it sweet?
OH!
HE'S...
YOU'RE ALL SCRATCHED UP.
REALLY? YOU THINK SO?
DID SHE DO THIS?
I DO!
EVEN THOUGH HE'S HAD A VERY... COLORFUL PAST.
...THE GUY FOR ME.
HEY, YABE.

"STOP"?
FINALLY!
IS HE REALLY GOING TO...?
...WILL YOU...
WHAAA--?!
STOP!!!
BUT WHY?!
AT LAST, I CAN BE...
HE IS!

...HUH?
I WANTED TO TIE UP ALL MY LOOSE ENDS...
...BEFORE I ASKED YOU OUT.
DO YOU HAVE SOME TIME TO TALK?
I PROMISE YOU, I'M GOING TO GET IT RIGHT WITH US.
YURI. WOULD YOU...
WILL HE SAY IT?
I DON'T BELIEVE IT.


HAS MY WOUND...
"SO, YOU MUST BE MOTO-CHAN'S FRIEND."
...STABBED YOU WITH A HATE THAT WAS EVEN LARGER?
CAN YOU FINALLY RETURN TO THE PLACE WHERE THE WOMAN YOU LOVED MORE THAN THE ENTIRE WORLD...
CAN YOU HANDLE IT?
IF HE'S OVER KANAKO...?
...PROVIDED YOU'RE COMPLETELY OVER MY DEAD SISTER.
IT SHOULD BE A TOTAL CINCH...
THAT IS, IF YOU CAN STAND TO BE ANYWHERE NEAR MY HOUSE.
KA-KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN?!
IF YOU WANT TO TELL HER THE REST OF IT, DO IT AFTER SCHOOL. AT MY HOUSE.
HOLD THAT THOUGHT.
MOTOKO ...!


KAGURA-ZAKA...?
THIS IS YOUR CHANCE.
SHOW SOME GUTS AND DON'T SCREW UP THIS TIME, 'KAY?
...I WANT YOU TO BE AT MY HOUSE TO HAUL YURI AWAY. PHYSICALLY, METAPHORICALLY, WHATEVER IT TAKES.
REGARD-LESS OF WHETHER YABE SHOWS...
AND HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOURSELF...
THE LAST THING YABE NEEDS IS TO BE DATING YURI.
WHAT?
...FINALLY HEALED?
WAAAH!!! KAGURAZAKA-SAN!! WHAT DID YOU HAVE TO GO AND DO THAT FOR?!
I WAS THIS CLOSE TO ETERNAL BLISS!!
WAAAH!
Muroi-san, she's not being mean...
I hate you!
I WOULDN'T COUNT ON IT.
But... but... that she-devil... waaah!
It'll be okay, Muroi-san.
HE'S GOING TO ASK HER OUT.
AND SHE'S GOING TO SAY YES.
YOU HEARD ALL THAT, EH?
Pathetic Prez

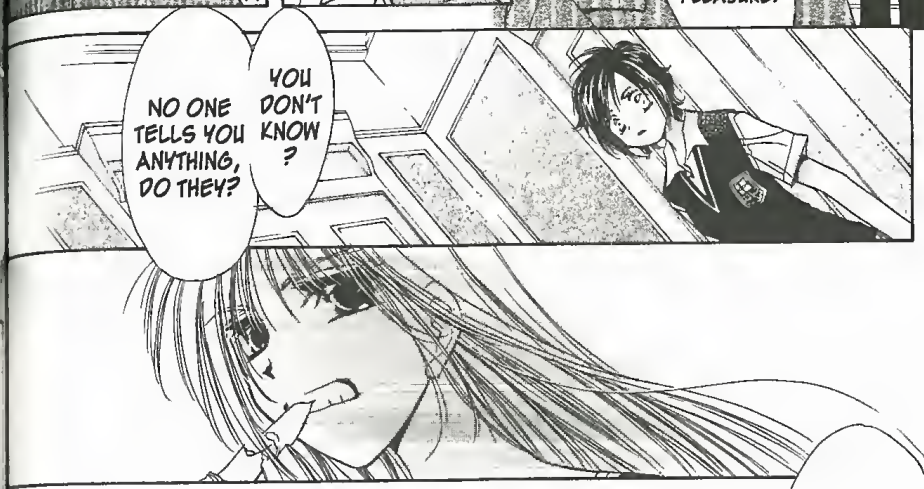
ボトッ…
I WONDER WHY...
BECAUSE THEY HAVE DIFFERENT MOTHERS, THAT'S WHY.
WHAAAA ?!
TELL ME ABOUT IT.
HM?
Dammit! There's no fish sausage left!!
Well... er... she kinda ...
...WENT OUT TO BUY SNACKS.
hmph MORE FISH SAUSAGE, I'M SURE. SHE NEVER TIRES OF THE THINGS.
SO I GATHERED. WHERE IS THAT IDIOT GRAND-DAUGHTER OF MINE, ANYWAY?
KA-
KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN'S GRAND-FATHER!

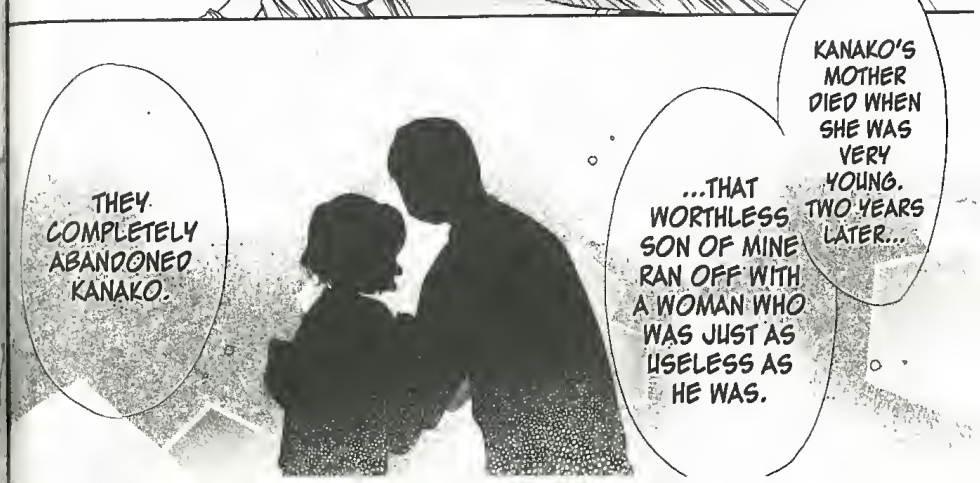
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU PLOTTING NOW?
YABE-SENPAI AND KANAKO-SAN...HNNNH.
I WONDER IF HE'LL REALLY COME?
KANAKO-SAN IS LOVELY, WITH A WONDERFULLY SWEET FACE.
Yabe-senpai looks yummy, too!
KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN IS QUITE A BEAUTY...

WHAT?
THIS NEW WOMAN BECAME PREGNANT WITH MOTOKO ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.
THEY STAYED AWAY WHILE THEY WERE ALIVE, BUT AFTER THEY DIED, MOTOKO WAS ADOPTED INTO THIS HOUSE. BEFORE THAT...
...KANAKO NEVER EVEN KNEW SHE HAD A SISTER.
...IS THIS?
WHO...

...FOR KANAKO-SAN...
SO...
SHE WAS SO AWKWARD, WITH GANGLY LIMBS AND GLEAMING EYES, LIKE SOME KIND OF WILD IMP.
MOTOKO WAS A FILTHY LITTLE BRAT WHEN SHE FIRST ARRIVED. SHE ALWAYS LOOKED LIKE SHE'D SWAM THROUGH MUD TO GET WHERE SHE WAS GOING. BUT EVEN THEN, IT WAS CLEAR THAT SHE'D BE A BEAUTY.
WHAT'S A BEAUTIFUL BOY LIKE HIM DOING HERE?

Just got home from work
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "WHEN SHE WAS POOR"? AND DID YOU MEAN IT WHEN YOU SAID SHE HAD A DIFFERENT MOTHER?
HUH? UM... SIR?
"WHEN SHE WAS POOR" ...?
Where in the world would he go dressed like that?
!
?
WHEN SHE WAS POOR, IT WAS ALL SHE COULD AFFORD, BUT NOW THAT SHE HAS MY MONEY, SHE EATS THEM FOR SOME SICK PLEASURE.


YOU DON'T KNOW?
NO ONE TELLS YOU ANYTHING, DO THEY?

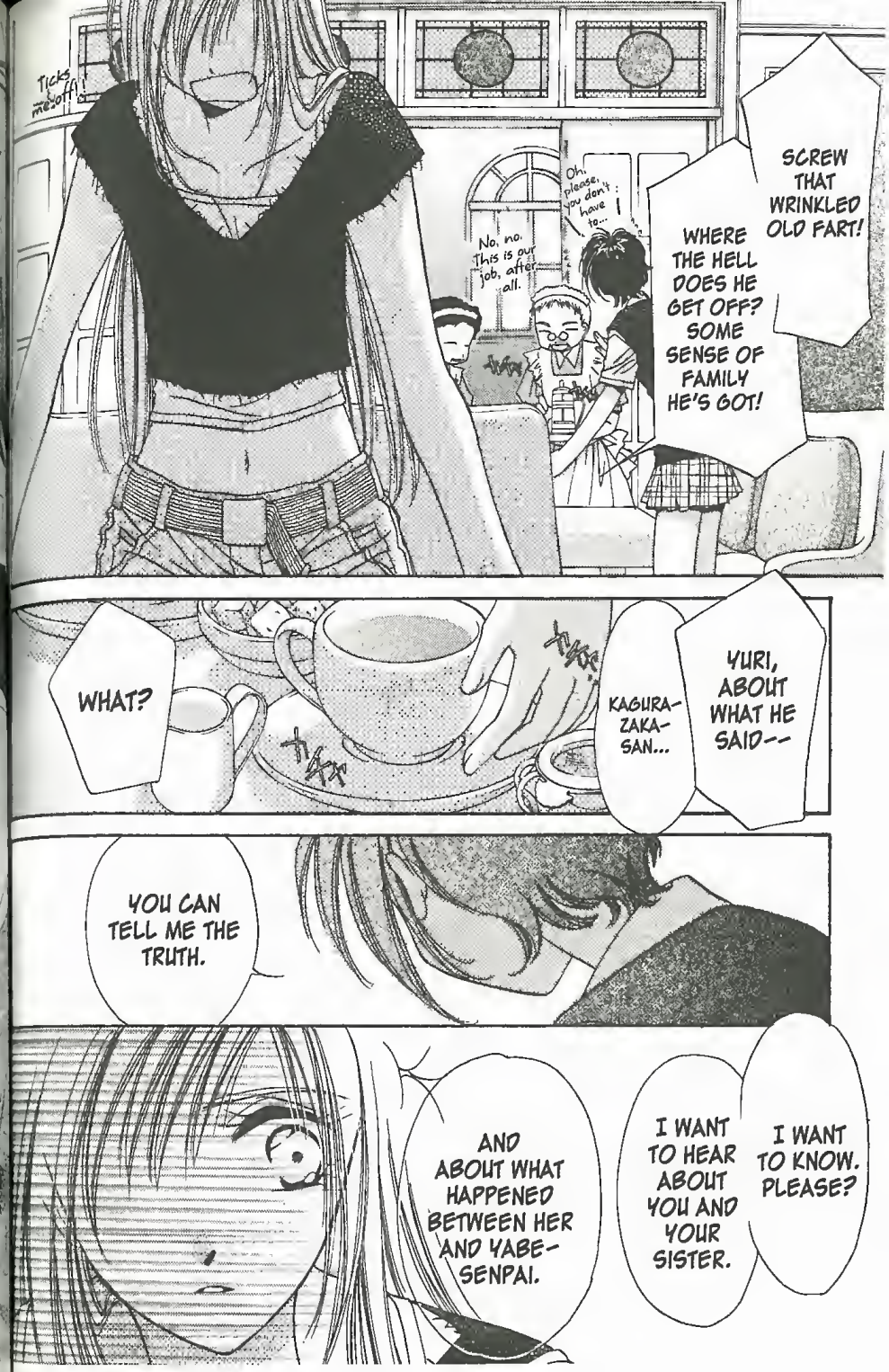

THEY COMPLETELY ABANDONED KANAKO.
...THAT WORTHLESS SON OF MINE RAN OFF WITH A WOMAN WHO WAS JUST AS USELESS AS HE WAS.
KANAKO'S MOTHER DIED WHEN SHE WAS VERY YOUNG. TWO YEARS LATER...

WHAT?
...THAT WASN'T THE ONLY REASON YOU WERE DEAD SET AGAINST DAD MARRYING MY MOM, WAS IT?
BESIDES ...
UM... PLEASE DON'T...
HOW COULD MY SON EXPECT ME TO ACCEPT HIS MARRIAGE TO A WOMAN WHO'D ALREADY BEEN DIVORCED?!
A-ARE YOU JOKING?
NICE TO KNOW YOU'RE A SEXIST PIG ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE!
DAD HAD BEEN MARRIED ONCE, TOO, YOU HYPOCRITICAL MIDGET!
HE WENT COMPLETELY PALE WHEN SHE SAID THAT.
...AHEM... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
I...
WHO YOU KIDDING? I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING MORE INAPPROPRIATE THAN WEARING THAT SHIRT WITH THAT TIE!
I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING REMOTELY INAPPROPRIATE!
If you're going to have lousy fashion sense, at least try to be a decent human being to even things out.
Don't you two have work to do?!
That's not bad advice, sir.
Eavesdropping maids

WHAT?
YOU WERE THE ONE WHO REFUSED TO LET HER BE WITH HER FATHER.
KAGU-RAZAKA-SAN!
...TO PRY HER AWAY FROM THE PEOPLE WHO WOULD'VE LOVED HER.
YOU USED KANAKO'S CONDITION AND THE RESULTING MEDICAL EXPENSES AS AN EXCUSE...

MOTOKO'S PRESENCE MUST HAVE FILLED A VOID IN HER LONELY LIFE. THE FIRST PERSON TO CARE...
...SISTER-HOOD WAS BRAND NEW.
NICE STORY, GRAMPS, BUT WHAT ABOUT THAT PART WHERE IT WAS YOU WHO LEFT KANAKO ALONE MOST OF HER LIFE?

ALL RIGHT.
BUT FIRST...
...SINCE THE MOMENT I FELL FOR YABE-SENPAI.
...WE'VE BEEN THROUGH ENOUGH TOGETHER FOR YOU TO FEEL SAFE LETTING ME OUT OF THE DARK?
I'M TOO TANGLED IN IT ALL TO GET OUT NOW, AND HAVE BEEN...
DON'T YOU THINK...
Fascinated
sip
THE CLUCKING CHICKENS HAVE TO GO!


Ticks me off!
Oh, please, you don't have to...
No, no. This is our job, after all.
WHERE THE HELL DOES HE GET OFF? SOME SENSE OF FAMILY HE'S GOT!
SCREW THAT WRINKLED OLD FART!
WHAT?
KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN...
YURI, ABOUT WHAT HE SAID--
YOU CAN TELL ME THE TRUTH.
AND ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN HER AND YABE-SENPAI.
I WANT TO HEAR ABOUT YOU AND YOUR SISTER.
I WANT TO KNOW. PLEASE?

THAT'S NOT THE KIND OF TOPIC ONE DISCUSSES IN POLITE COMPANY.
WHAT ABOUT MOTOKO-SAN'S MOTHER?
WHICH IS TO BE EXPECTED. AFTER ALL, SHE WAS A DAUGHTER OF THE OWNER OF TOBIDA PHARMACEUTICAL.
DON'T ASK.
YES. I MET KANAKO-SAN'S MOTHER JUST BEFORE SHE DIED. IT WAS AT THE COMPANY'S ANNUAL FOUNDING DAY CELEBRATION.
SHE WAS A REFINED, DELICATE LADY.
chuckle
HAS ANYONE EVER ACTUALLY MET HER?
AREN'T YOU THE LEAST BIT CURIOUS?
MOTOKO-SAN IS A BEAUTIFUL CHILD, AND SHE HAS POISE AND ELEGANCE.
True, but she's also a tad boyish, don't you find?
WITH POSTURE AND SCULPTING LIKE THAT, HER MOTHER MUST BE FROM A FAMILY OF PROPER WEALTH AND STATION.
Why don't you come over and talk with us?
Oooh, he's almost as pretty as a girl!
Now there's a cute one.
A trio of potential...?
whisper
DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO THEM, MOTO-CHAN.
...HNH...
THEY'RE JUST JEALOUS AND PAST THEIR PRIME.
NN?
IT IS. THAT'S FUMIO KAGURA-ZAKA'S... OTHER CHILD, THE POOR LITTLE ORPHAN.
DON'T LOOK NOW...BUT ISN'T IT THAT CHILD OVER THERE?
YABE AND KANAKO MET...
...AT A YOZAKURA DINNER PARTY. IT WAS THE FIRST NIGHT-TIME FLOWER VIEWING WE'D HAD SINCE I'D MOVED IN.
I WAS STILL A BIT OF A TOMBOY THEN.
BUT THEY HAVE DIFFERENT MOTHERS, CORRECT?
YOU CAN SEE THE RESEMBLANCE. SUCH LOVELY FACES.

IS IT AN ATTACK?
I'LL GO GET THE DOCTOR RIGHT AWAY.
OH, GOOD-NESS!
MISS KANAKO ...
...ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
Motoya
NO, DON'T BOTHER.
Please...
GO SIT DOWN UNDER THAT TREE.
I TOLD YOU NOT TO WEAR SUCH A THIN DRESS TO THIS STUPID THING. SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T LISTEN?
N-NO..
NOT...AN ATTACK... JUST... T-TIRED.
THEY'RE EVIL HARPIES HIDING BEHIND FANCY CLOTHES AND MAKE-UP!
I WON'T LET YOU!
YOU STAY AWAY FROM THOSE THREE BIMBOS, YOU HEAR ME?! DON'T GO NEAR THEM!
Come here...
WHA-?!
SOME-THING SMELLS TASTY...
NO!
ACK!
YOU'RE WAY MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN ALL OF THEM COMBINED!
LOOK AT ME!
KANAKO!
KANAKO!
KANAKO.
...KANAKO?

NO...
No worries here.
YOU KNOW THAT. I CAN PICK YOU UP AND CARRY YOU AROUND WITH JUST ONE ARM.
Why?
BOYS ARE WASTES OF SPACE. I'M ALREADY STRONGER THAN MOST OF 'EM ALREADY ANYWAY.
THAT'S...
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT AT ALL.
IT WOULD BE A LONG TIME...
...BEFORE I'D REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT.
...HM?
I WISH...
...YOU WERE... A BOY, MOTO-CHAN.

WHAT?
IF I JUST HOLD HER FOR A WHILE...
...SHE'LL BE FINE IN NO TIME.
Y-YES, MISS.
The strange feeling of seeing...
...something that exactly matches...
UM...
FEELING ANY BETTER, KANAKO?

I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE!
S-SCREW YOU!
...LAUGHING AT HER BECAUSE SHE'S FRAIL...
MAKING FUN OF HER BECAUSE SHE'S AN ORPHAN...
EVERYONE ELSE SAYS THE SAME KINDS A THINGS!
PAPA'S GOT A LOT TO BE PROUD OF!
YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD PICK ON MY SISTER WHILE I WASN'T LOOKING...
...BUT NOW YOU-KNOW DIFFERENT, DON'T YOU? BIG MAN!
LIKE HOW YOU PROBABLY DON'T HAVE A DROP OF TRUE KAGURA-IZAKA BLOOD IN YOU..

KYAAAA!
MOTO-CHAN!
D-D-DON'T THINK YOU'RE G-GOING TO GET AWAY WITH THIS!
I'LL TELL PAPA, AND YOU--
GO AHEAD AND TELL "PAPA"! TELL HIM I BEAT SOME GLASS INTO YOUR SMUG LITTLE ASS!

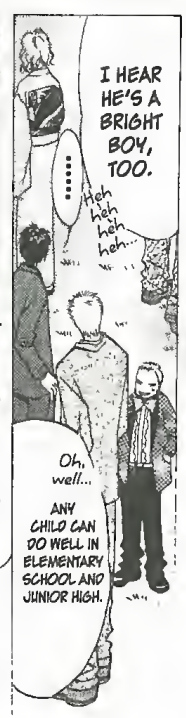
TAKAHIRO, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
Tug
THAT "LOVELY GRANDDAUGHTER" YOU TWO ARE BARTERING WITH IS GETTING INTO A FIGHT.
OH, COME ON. I'LL EVEN THROW MY LOVELY GRANDDAUGHTER INTO THE DEAL.
WHAT DID YOU SAY?!
IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A FIGHT, CREAMPUFF, YOU GOT ONE! I'LL MURDER YOU!
KILL ME, AND I'LL SUE!

ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL PARTY, MR. PRESIDENT.
YOU FLATTER ME, YABE-SAN. WE WERE IN HANAYAGURA LAST WEEK, BUT THE YAMAZAKURA IN YOSHINOYAMA WERE JUST AS BEAUTIFUL. THERE'S NOTHING MORE GORGEOUS THAN CHERRY BLOSSOMS.
ha ha ha!
OUR GARDEN IS FULL OF SOMEIYOSHINO, WHICH IS JUST AS SPECTACULAR A BREED OF CHERRY TREE.

HOW TALL ARE YOU, BOY?
I'M 5'8", SIR.
YOU'RE HUGE!
Just started junior high.

ARE YOU PREPPING HIM TO TAKE OVER THE BUSINESS?
I'M AFRAID I CAN'T. MY POSITION AT THE BANK ISN'T HEREDITARY.

NO! BUT... THANK YOU.
I knew you were up to something...
Well, then...
LET ME HAVE HIM. I'LL MAKE SURE HE GOES FAR IN MY COMPANY.
He'll make a bank president look like a meter maid.


I HEAR HE'S A BRIGHT BOY, TOO.
Heh heh heh heh...
Oh, well...
ANY CHILD CAN DO WELL IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND JUNIOR HIGH.

I AM HONORED THAT YOU EXTENDED AN INVITATION FOR HIM TO ATTEND.
IF I MAY, I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO MY SON.
HELLO.
I'M TAKAHIRO YABE.
Nice suit... if you're a lounge singer!
Wow.
YOU YABES SURE KNOW HOW TO RAISE 'EM BIG.

SO...
...YOU MUST BE MOTO-CHAN'S FRIEND.
...THAT PARTY MAY HAVE MARKED THE BEGINNING OF KANAKO'S SLIDE INTO MADNESS.
THIS GUY MIGHT DESERVE A POUNDING, BUT IS IT WORTH YOUR PRECIOUS SISTER'S TEARS?
...YABE ...?
COME TO THINK OF IT...
WHO IS THIS--?
Your grand-father invited me.
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
THEN CALL YOUR LAWYER!
CALM DOWN, MOTOKO.
HUH?

IN THOSE DAYS, NO ONE HAD THE SLIGHTEST CLUE WHAT KANAKO WAS THINKING...
TAKA-HIRO...
DO YOU LOVE ME?
...LET ALONE WHAT SHE MIGHT GET INTO HER HEAD TO DO.
I WANT THIS FEELING TO LAST FOREVER.
MORE THAN ANY-THING.
Tee-hee!
OF COURSE NOT.
NOT IN THE LEAST. WHAT ABOUT YOU? DO YOU REGRET IT, KANAKO-SAN?
DO YOU REGRET DOING THIS WITH ME?
THEN...
I WAS THE ONE WHO SEDUCED YOU, REMEMBER?

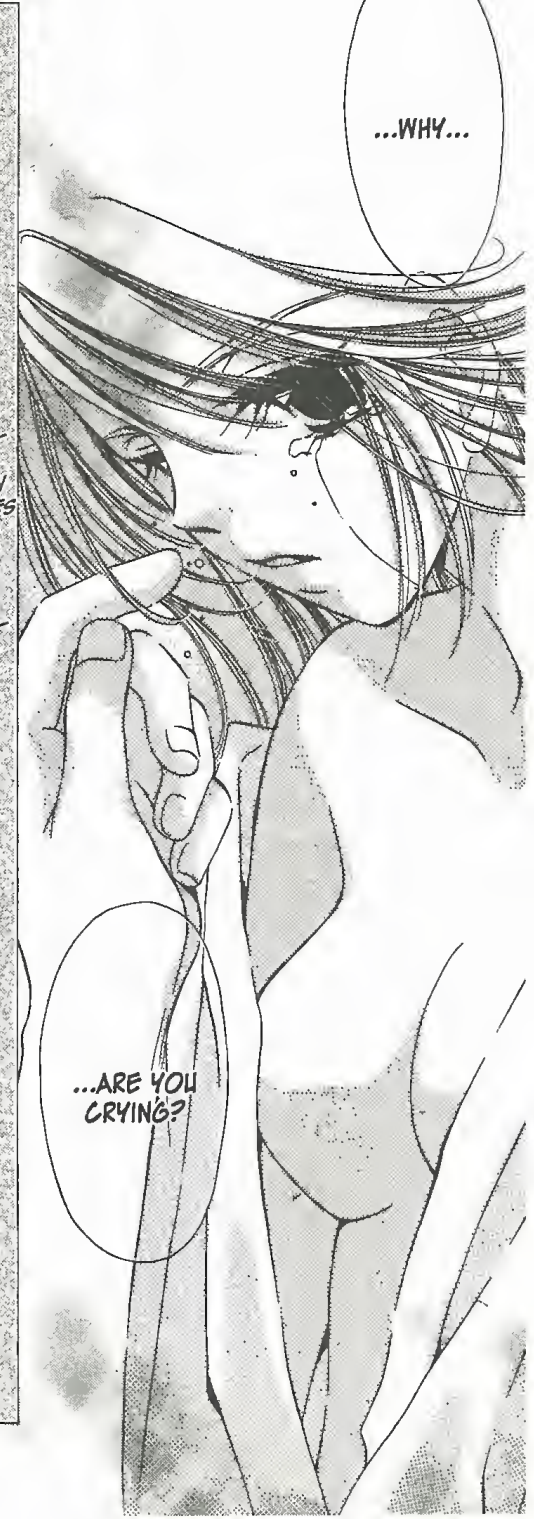
Good question.

Gatcha Gacha

...THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON IN THIS WORLD I TRULY LOVE, ONLY ONE PERSON I'LL EVER WANT TO GIVE MYSELF TO ENTIRELY. ONLY, IT'S NEVER TO BE...

AFTER ALL...

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE BODIES OF TWO PEOPLE IS THIN AND MEANINGLESS.



AT LEAST I RESCUE EVERYONE. I DON'T EXCLUSIVELY SAVE PRETTY GIRLS, THE WAY YOU DO.
YOU'RE SO PREDICT-ABLE.
MR. CHIVALRY?
YEAH, I HEARD SOME ALUM FROM YOUR SCHOOL WAS GIVING THE KENDO TEAM A HARD TIME, AND YOU SENT HIM PACKING.
LET'S GO OUTSIDE, MOTOKO.
WE HAVEN'T PLAYED CATCH IN AGES.
...YABE STARTED VISITING OUR HOUSE A LOT MORE OFTEN.
WHAT MADE YOU SUCH AN INSUFFERABLE GOODY-TWO-SHOES?
WHAT ARE YOU, MY DAD?
THOUGH HIS REASONS FOR COMING ...
SHUT UP!
I saved a guy once! Though I did think he was a girl...
AFTER THAT PARTY...

..TAKA-HIRO!!
YOU'VE COME TO SEE US AGAIN..
Sorry
That girl's trouble...
NO FAIR!
SO, WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, MR. CHIVALRY?
WHAT DID I DO TO MAKE THIS GUY SO OBSESSED WITH ME?
SORRY. I JUST STOPPED BY TO TALK TO MOTOKO.
Kids these days...
HAH! I SWEAR YOU GROW TALLER EVERY TIME I SEE YOU!
YOU READY TO FINISH THAT GAME WE STARTED?
びょーん
びょーん

Please direct fan letters of love and adoration for Tachibana to:

Hakusensha, Melody Editorial Department
2-2-2 Shinda Awaji-cho
Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo-to 101-0063 JAPAN

Motoko's elder sister, Kanako Kagurazaka. (Wow, writing her full name in kanji is a royal pain. I mean, there are six characters!) Whenever she steps into the spotlight, Gatcha Gacha takes an immediate turn into the serious. She's kinda like the "bad luck charm" of the story. Despite all that, strangely enough, I don't hate her.

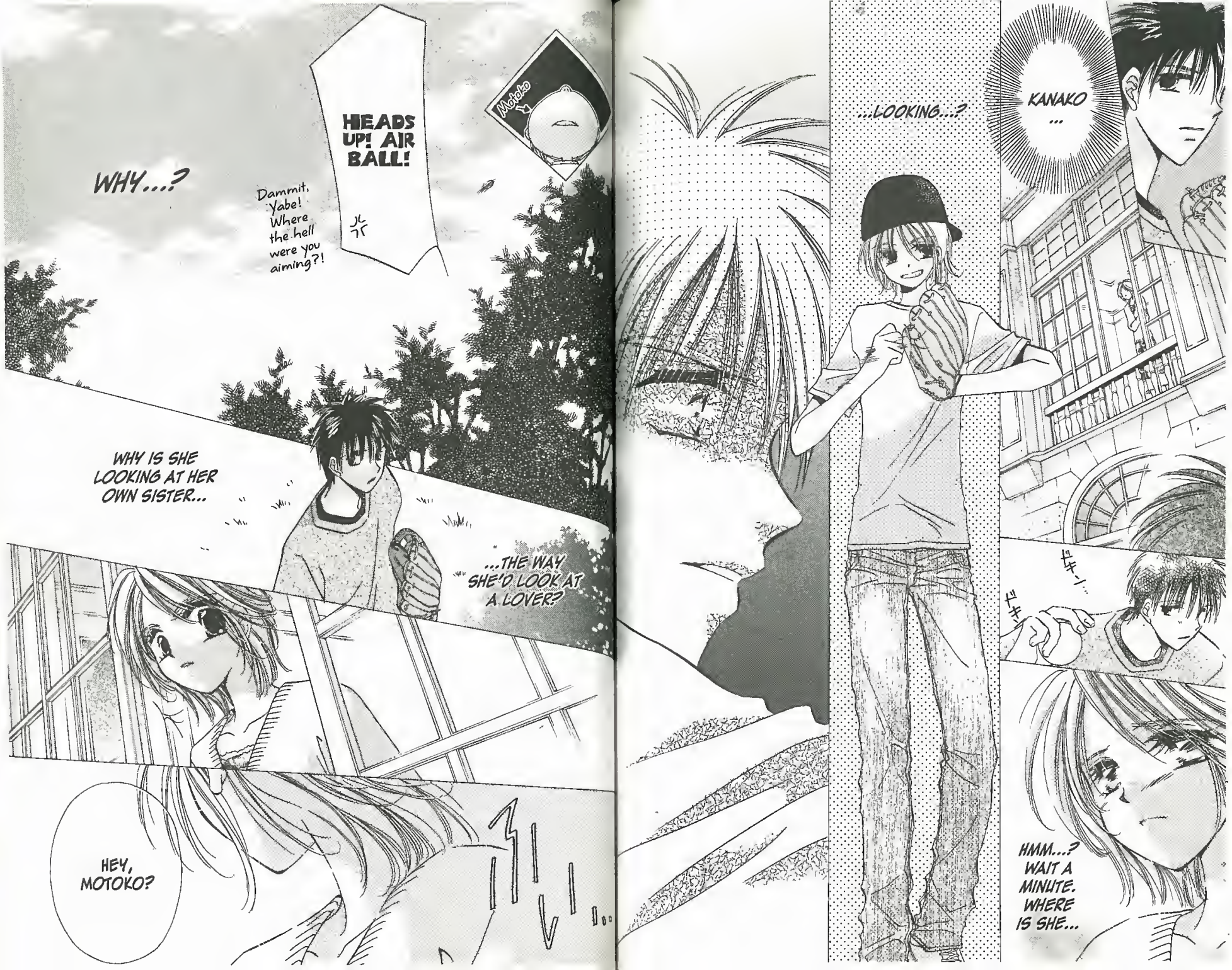
Besides, she's super easy to draw.

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO GO AND STAB THE POOR GUY?!

Does anyone else out there hate scary girls like her?

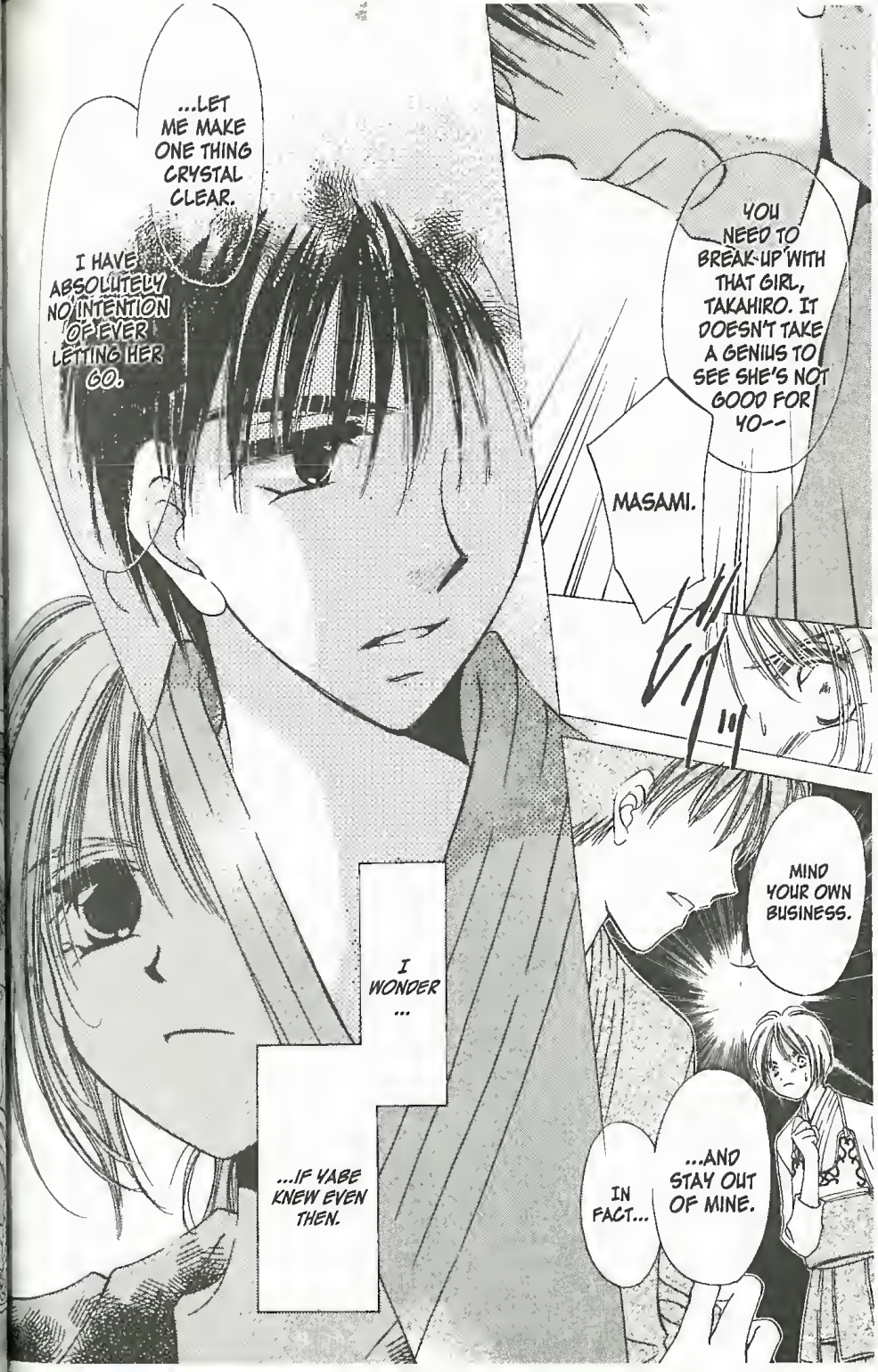
WELL, HOW WAS I TO KNOW? YOU DRESSED AND TALKED JUST LIKE A GUY.
No one could tell!
BUT EVER SINCE YOU FIGURED OUT I'M A GIRL, YOU'VE RUN AWAY FROM EVERY SINGLE ONE OF MY CHALLENGES!
WHEN I FIRST PICKED A FIGHT WITH YOU BACK IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, YOU DIDN'T HESITATE TO THRASH ME.
DUDE, YOU'VE ALWAYS HAD A PROBLEM WITH GIRLS. WHICH IS IRONIC FOR A SISSY!
Go away!
C'mon! Fight me!
Fight me!
Rough 'n' tumble grade schooler
WHAT?!
CALLING IT A BOY/GIRL PROBLEM IS BEING TOO KIND. WITH YOU THESE DAYS, IT'S, "IS SHE A MACHO MONSTROSITY OR SOME KIND OF UNHOLY SHE-BEAST?"
BOY, GIRL, WHAT DOES IT MATTER WHEN I'M BEATING YOUR ASS?

If Motoko's fastball doesn't give you a heart attack...
You might break a hip, Gramps.
I wanna play too!
OH.
HIYA!!
OKAY.
KANAKO'S NOT HAVING A GOOD DAY, SO I DOUBT SHE'LL BE JOINING US.
...WERE NEVER QUITE WHAT HE SAID THEY WERE.
QUIT TAKIN' ALL DAY, YABE! TOSS IT BACK!
HAND IS NUMB
YOWCH! NO NORMAL GIRL CAN THROW A BALL THAT HARD.
WHY DON'T YOU TAKE IT EASY? YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO TRY TO MUTILATE THE OTHER GUY WITH A CURVE-BALL WHEN YOU'RE JUST PLAYING CATCH!
HEY!! YOU TRYIN' TO GO EASY ON ME 'CAUSE I'M A GIRL?! CHAUVINIST PIG!
Besides, if we go all out, it'll wreck our arms.


HMM...? WAIT A MINUTE. WHERE IS SHE...
ドキーン
ドキーン
KANAKO ...
...LOOKING...?
HEY, MOTOKO?
...THE WAY SHE'D LOOK AT A LOVER?
WHY IS SHE LOOKING AT HER OWN SISTER...
Dammit, Yabe! Where the hell were you aiming?!
HEADS UP! AIR BALL!
Motoko
WHY...?

OH, HEY, MASAMI. WHAT'S UP?
TAKAHIRO! KAWAMURA-SENSEI'S LOOKING FOR YOU.
WELL...
ANOTHER EX-GIRL-FRIEND, I'LL BET.
Dummy!
WHAT'S UP WITH YOU?! WE'VE GOT PRACTICE WITH THE TEAM FROM NISHI TODAY, REMEMBER?
WHAT? GOT A PROBLEM?
Watch the attitude, youngster!
Broke up two months ago
WHEN I GOT TO JUNIOR HIGH, I STARTED TONING DOWN THE BOY THING.
WHAT INSPIRED IT?
HUH?
WHEN EXACTLY DID YOU DECIDE TO START ACTING LIKE A GIRL?
I DON'T KNOW. WHEN DID YOU DECIDE TO START BEING A JERK?
That's what you wanted to talk to me about?
THAT'S WHEN YOU STARTED TO GROW YOUR HAIR LONG, WASN'T IT?
Why're you asking?
WHO CARES?!
WHAT? IS YABE DATING SOMEONE?
...AND WHEN YOU DO COME TO PRACTICE, YOU'RE NOT REALLY THERE!
YOU'VE LOOKED EXHAUSTED EVER SINCE YOU HOOKED UP...
WHAT?
B.S.! YOU'RE TOTALLY HELPLESS. I MEAN, LOOK AT YOUR TASTE IN GIRLFRIENDS!!
That's why she's always alone.
EVERYONE WHO GETS NEAR HER HAS BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO THEM!
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU TO STAY AWAY FROM THIS CHICK!
I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.
I JUST... WANTED TO KNOW IF THERE WAS A REASON FOR THE CHANGE.
I MEAN, YOU LOOK GOOD AS A GIRL. IT'S A GOOD CHOICE.

SOME-
.THING WAS UNDENIABLY WRONG WITH KANAKO.
MOTO-CHAN?
ARE YOU... SLEEP-ING?
Zzz...


...LET ME MAKE ONE THING CRYSTAL CLEAR.
I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO INTENTION OF EVER LETTING HER GO.
YOU NEED TO BREAK UP WITH THAT GIRL, TAKAHIRO. IT DOESN'T TAKE A GENIUS TO SEE SHE'S NOT GOOD FOR YO--
MASAMI.
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS.
...AND STAY OUT OF MINE.
IN FACT...
I WONDER ...
...IF YABE KNEW EVEN THEN.

"THEN...WHY ARE YOU CRYING?"

...AND CUT INTO EVERYONE AROUND HER.

MISS KANAKO...

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

AND WHEN IT DID, THE BROKEN, RAZOR-SHARP SHARDS EXPLODED FROM HER...

SOMETHING INSIDE KANAKO HAD SHATTERED.

QUIT MAKING THIS ABOUT ME!!

WAAAH!! MOTO-CHAN, WHY'RE YOU SO MEAN TO ME?!

MMPH...

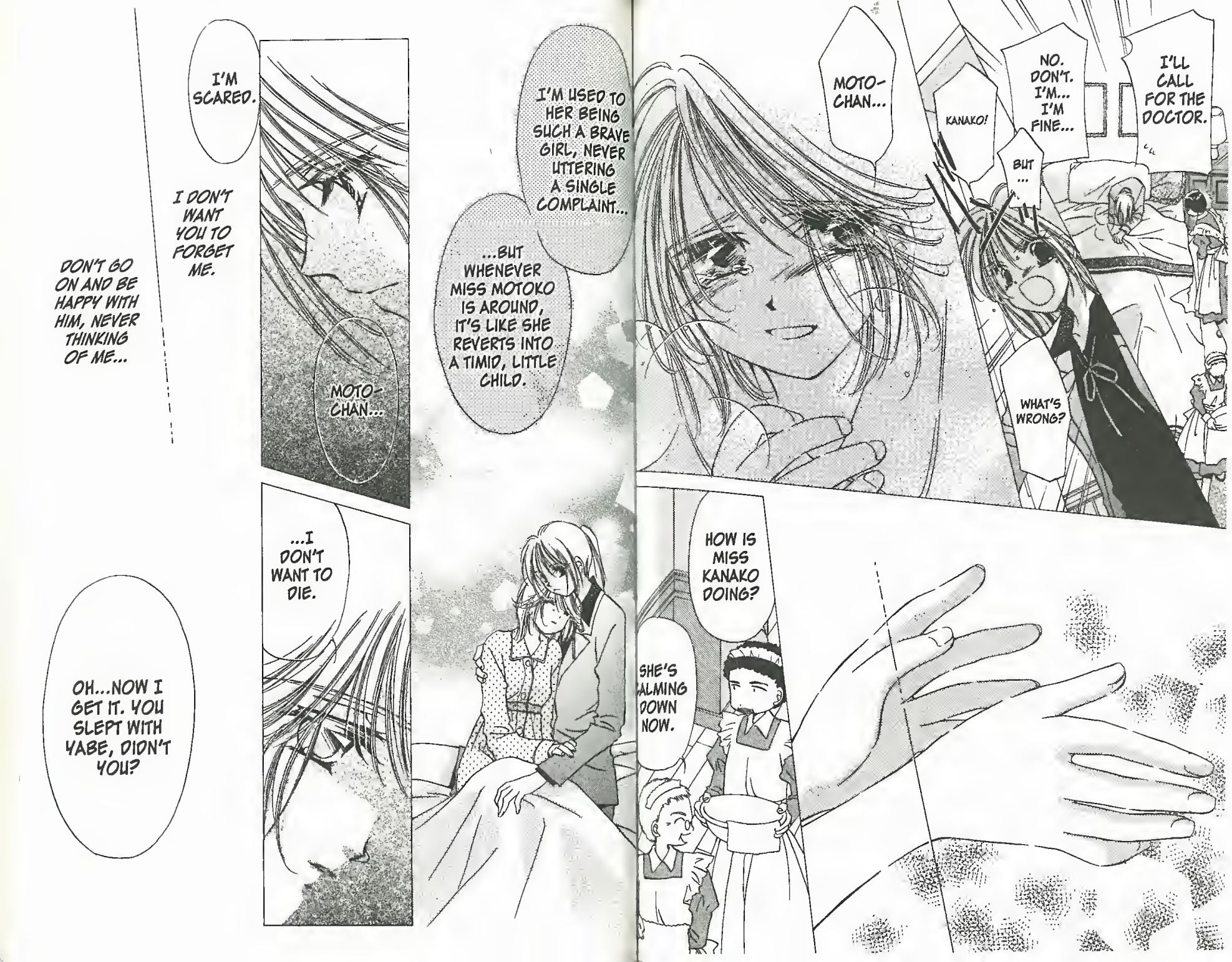
I can't even take a nap in peace any more!!

YOU BETTER QUIT PULLING THIS CRAP, YOU LITTLE TRAMP, OR YOU'LL GET YOURS!

WHAT...

...THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!

JUICE AMERICA PRINCE

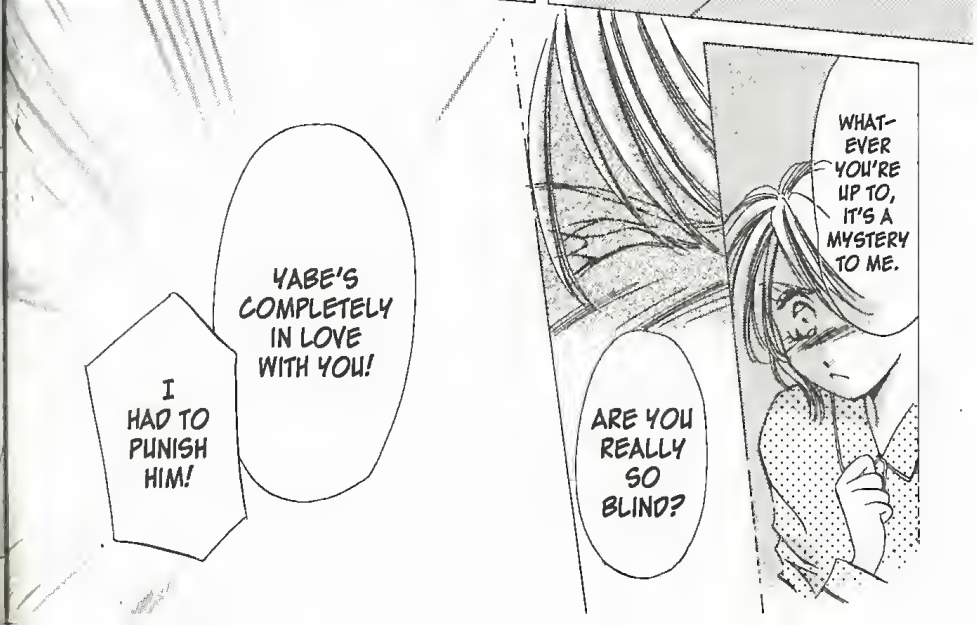

I'M SCARED.
I DON'T WANT YOU TO FORGET ME.
DON'T GO ON AND BE HAPPY WITH HIM, NEVER THINKING OF ME...
MOTO-CHAN...
I'M USED TO HER BEING SUCH A BRAVE GIRL, NEVER UTTERING A SINGLE COMPLAINT...
...BUT WHENEVER MISS MOTOKO IS AROUND, IT'S LIKE SHE REVERTS INTO A TIMID, LITTLE CHILD.
...I DON'T WANT TO DIE.
OH...NOW I GET IT. YOU SLEPT WITH YABE, DIDN'T YOU?
MOTO-CHAN...
KANAKO!
NO. DON'T. I'M... I'M FINE...
BUT ...
I'LL CALL FOR THE DOCTOR.
WHAT'S WRONG?
HOW IS MISS KANAKO DOING?
SHE'S CALMING DOWN NOW.

I MEAN, HE TRIED...
...TO TAKE YOU AWAY FROM ME.

BUT TAKAHIRO'S DIFFERENT. HE'S WAY MORE STUBBORN.
THOSE SILLY LITTLE MAIDS YOU WERE SO ATTACHED TO WERE A LITTLE HARDER TO MAKE DISAPPEAR, BUT I CAN USUALLY GET MY WAY WITH GRANDPA IF I TRY.
THE GIRLS AT SCHOOL WERE EASY TO SCARE OFF WITH JUST A COUPLE OF PRANKS.

I REFUSE TO SHARE YOU WITH ANYONE.
SO I SEDUCED HIM INSTEAD.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO.
EVEN YOU SEEM DETERMINED TO STAY FRIENDS.
I COULDN'T HARASS HIM HARSHLY ENOUGH, AND GRANDPA ADORES HIM SO MUCH HE WANTS TO GO GAY AND MARRY HIM AND HAVE HIM TAKE OVER THE COMPANY, SO THAT OLD BASTARD IS NO HELP.

...WHAT?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU THREW YOUR VIRGINITY AWAY ON A GUY YOU DON'T EVEN LIKE!
THAT'S A LOT OF STRESS TO PUT ON A HEART THAT'S ALREADY SICK AND ILL.
IF YOU CAN'T KEEP YOUR PANTIES ON, THEN AT LEAST REMEMBER TO BRIBE THE CLUCKING CHICKENS SO THEY'LL KEEP THEIR FAT TRAPS SHUT. OKAY?
I-I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, MOTO-CHAN...


YABE'S COMPLETELY IN LOVE WITH YOU!
I HAD TO PUNISH HIM!
ARE YOU REALLY SO BLIND?
WHAT-EVER YOU'RE UP TO, IT'S A MYSTERY TO ME.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT HIM.
OR WHETHER HE LIVES OR DIES.
I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO RESPOND, SO I DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING.
LOOKING BACK ON IT NOW, MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE.
IT WAS THE DAY THE DOCTORS HAD FINALLY SCHEDULED HER HEART SURGERY.
TWO WEEKS PASSED BEFORE WE EVEN SPOKE AGAIN.
AFTER THAT, I AVOIDED KANAKO COMPLETELY.

YOU'RE ALL I'VE EVER WANTED.
IT WAS JUST SEX. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE BODIES OF TWO PEOPLE IS THIN AND MEANINGLESS.
THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON IN THIS WORLD I TRULY LOVE, ONLY ONE PERSON I'LL EVER WANT TO GIVE MYSELF TO ENTIRELY. ONLY, IT'S NEVER TO BE...
MY DESIRES ARE SIMPLE.

"THEY CAN OPERATE ON ME ALL THEY WANT, IT WON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE. I'LL DIE ANYWAY."
"ONCE I'M IN THE GROUND, YOU'LL END UP BEING TAKAHIRO'S GIRLFRIEND, WON'T YOU?"
"WELL, I'M NEVER GOING TO LET THAT HAP--"
SLAP

I DON'T EVER WANT TO SEE YOUR FACE AGAIN.
YOU'RE DEAD TO ME ALREADY.

KANAKO HAD SEEMED PERFECTLY NORMAL WHEN I SAW HER...
I WASN'T THERE WHEN IT HAPPENED. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT HAD HAPPENED UNTIL THE AMBULANCE WAS ALREADY GONE. ONE OF THE MAIDS TOLD ME.
WHAT WOULD DRIVE KANAKO-SAN TO ATTACK YABE-SENPAI AT A TIME LIKE THAT?
WHY ?!
DON'T ASK ME.
IT WAS ALSO THE DAY SHE STABBED YABE.
WHAT ?!

"YOU... DID WHAT?"
...GIVING NO OUTWARD SIGN THAT SHE'D NEARLY KILLED SOMEONE.
"WHAT DOES IT MATTER? I'M STILL GOING TO D-DIE."
"YOU STABBED HIM?! WHY?!"

YABE-SENPAI'S FEELINGS... NOW I KNOW WHY HE CALLS THEM HEAVY.
THEY'RE CERTAINLY HEAVIER THAN MINE!
BUT...
THERE'S JUST TOO MUCH TO PROCESS... I CAN'T BE SURE.
...
ARE YOU GIVING UP ON HIM?
...BUT...
YURI. DO YOU THINK...
HE'S NEVER LET HER GO. HE CARRIES A TORCH TO THIS DAY.
...YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO LOVE A MAN WHOSE HEART BELONGS TO A GHOST?

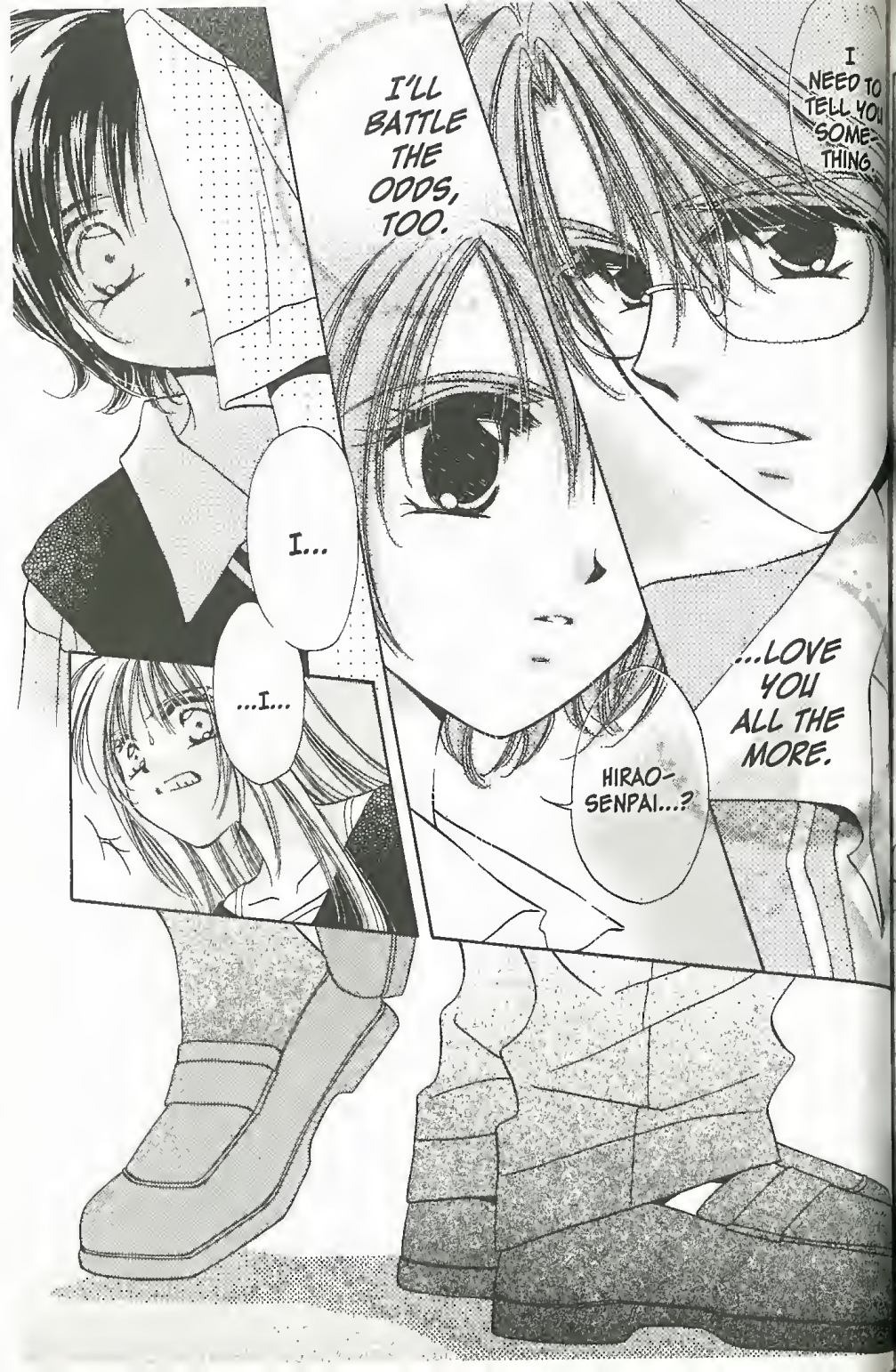
GRANDPA APOLOGIZED TO YABE'S PARENTS ON KANAKO'S BEHALF. IT WAS PATHETIC THE WAY HE WAS KOWTOWING AND BAWLING LIKE A BABY.
I WAITED UNTIL YABE WAS OUT OF SURGERY AND STABILIZED BEFORE I TOLD HIM.
I WAS LATE COMING HOME, SO KANAKO WENT OUT LOOKING FOR ME. SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, SHE HAD AN ATTACK, AND THERE WAS NO ONE AROUND TO HELP.
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT...WELL, YOU ALREADY KNOW.
...HE WAS STILL TRYING TO PROTECT HER.
"DID IT...TO MYSELF ..."
EVEN WHEN HE WAS HALF-CONSCIOUS AND BLEEDING HIS GUTS OUT...
BUT YABE HIM-SELF...
...HE WOULD NEVER ADMIT THAT KANAKO STABBED HIM.

SHE CAN'T MEAN TO LITERALLY PICK YURI UP? CAN SHE?
(And that lasted barely half a day.)
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO KNOW WHAT TO DO? I'VE ONLY EVER DATED ONE GIRL.
Instincts, man! Act on your instincts!
"HAUL YURI AWAY" ...?
But... WHAT EXACTLY DID KAGURA-ZAKA MEAN BY THAT? ISN'T THAT KIDNAPPING?
No, no, no, Hirao! This is a shojo manga! There's no logic!
I CAN GO ALL CAVEMAN, BUT THAT WON'T MAKE MUROI STOP LIKING YABE... ESPECIALLY NOW THAT HE'S STARTING TO FALL FOR HER, TOO.
BESIDES, THE TWO OF THEM DO MAKE A PRETTY CUTE COUPLE.
I CAN BARGE IN AND DRAG HER OUT BY THE HAIR, BUT HE'S STILL YABE AND I'M STILL ME.
SO WHY IN GOD'S NAME...
...DID I COME HERE?

KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN, I...!
...ISN'T THIS LOVE?!
NOBODY'S GOING TO BLAME YOU IF YOU DO. YOU CAN'T BE EXPECTED TO DO THE IMPOSSIBLE...
"...I WANT YOU TO BE AT MY HOUSE TO HAUL YURI AWAY."
"WHETHER OR NOT YABE SHOWS ..."
Hirao Vision
.....
"THE LAST THING YABE NEEDS IS TO BE DATING YURI."
The house is bigger than I remember...
DON'T ASK ME WHY, BUT HERE I AM.

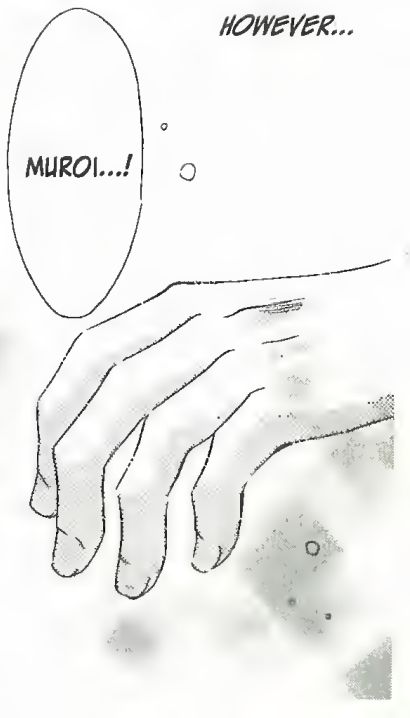
HIRAO-SENPAI, GET OUT OF MY WAY, PLEASE!
WHOA!
...BUT IF YOU DON'T MOVE, I WILL PLOW RIGHT THROUGH YOU!
I REALLY DON'T WANT TO...
...DID THIS HAPPEN?!
HOW...
...THE HELL
Battle mode
I THOUGHT I WAS HERE TO HAUL HER OUT, NOT KEEP HER IN!

YOU CAN TRY AS HARD AS YOU WANT, BUT YOU'LL ALWAYS END UP FAILING JUST THE SAME!
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT I DO, IT'S ALL POINTLESS.
HUH?
DON'T BE AN IDIOT! THE WRITING'S ON THE WALL, YURI!
YOU DON'T KNOW EVERYTHING, KAGURAZAKA-SAN! LOVE MEANS BEATING THE ODDS!
WHAAA--?!
STOP THAT LITTLE IMBECILE BEFORE SHE RUNS OFF TO LOOK FOR YABE ON HER OWN!
GRAB HER?
...HUH?
WHO CARES WHAT'S WRITTEN WHERE! I'M GOING TO LIVE MY LIFE THE WAY I WANT TO!
The gate's opening
HIRAO! PERFECT!
GRAB HER!
WHAT?!
IF SHE ESCAPES, IT'LL RUIN MY WHOLE PLAN!
WHAT THE HECK?


I'LL BATTLE THE ODDS, TOO.
I NEED TO TELL YOU SOME-THING...
I...
...I...
HIRAO-SENPAI...?
...LOVE YOU ALL THE MORE.

STOP FOR JUST A SECOND.
I...
...SEEING YOU TRY SO HARD EVEN THOUGH THE ODDS ARE STACKED AGAINST YOU...
Huh?
...JUST MAKES ME...

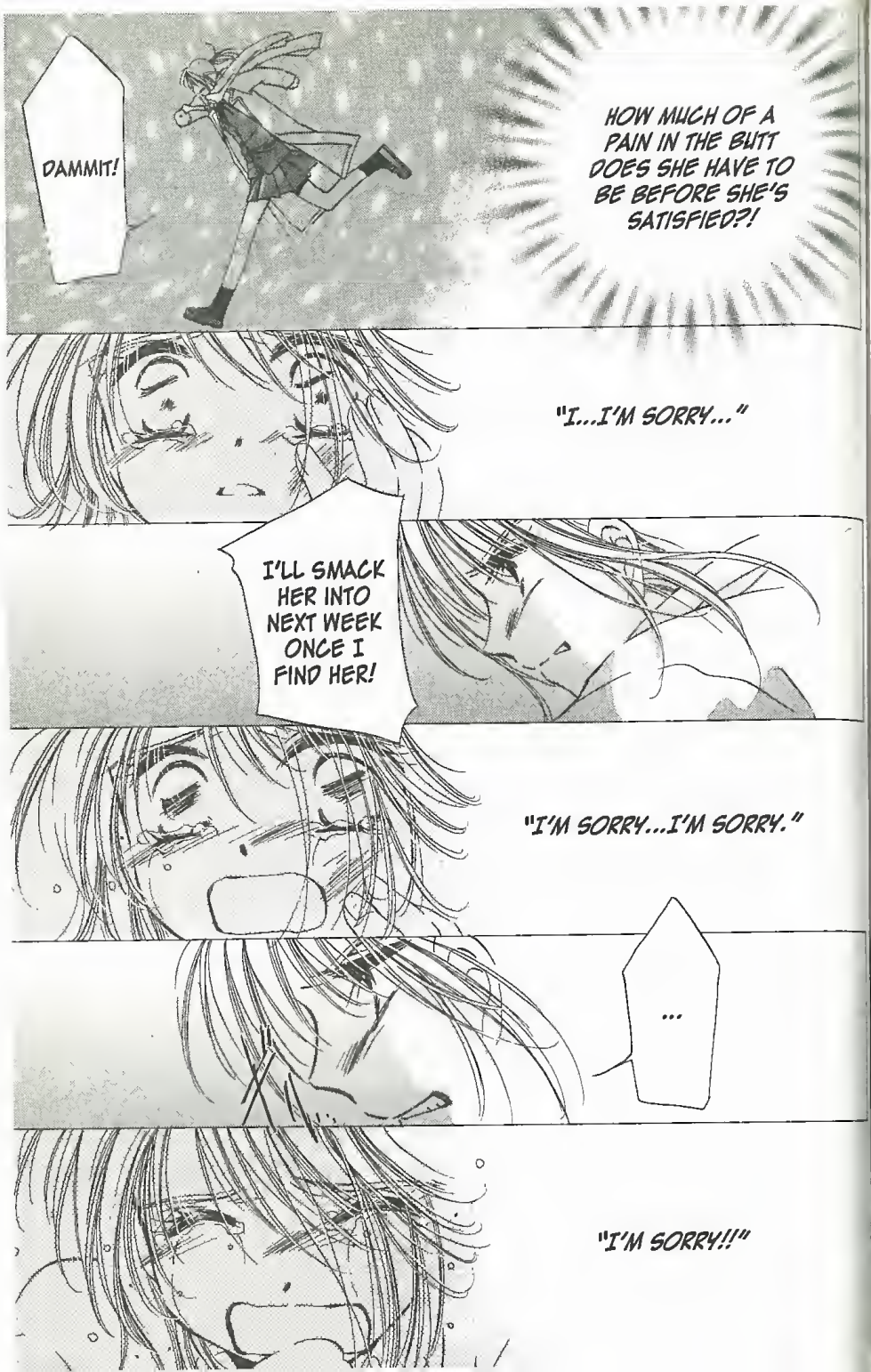
Grrrrrr...
THIS...
...MAY WELL BE POINT-LESS.


HOWEVER...
MUROI...!

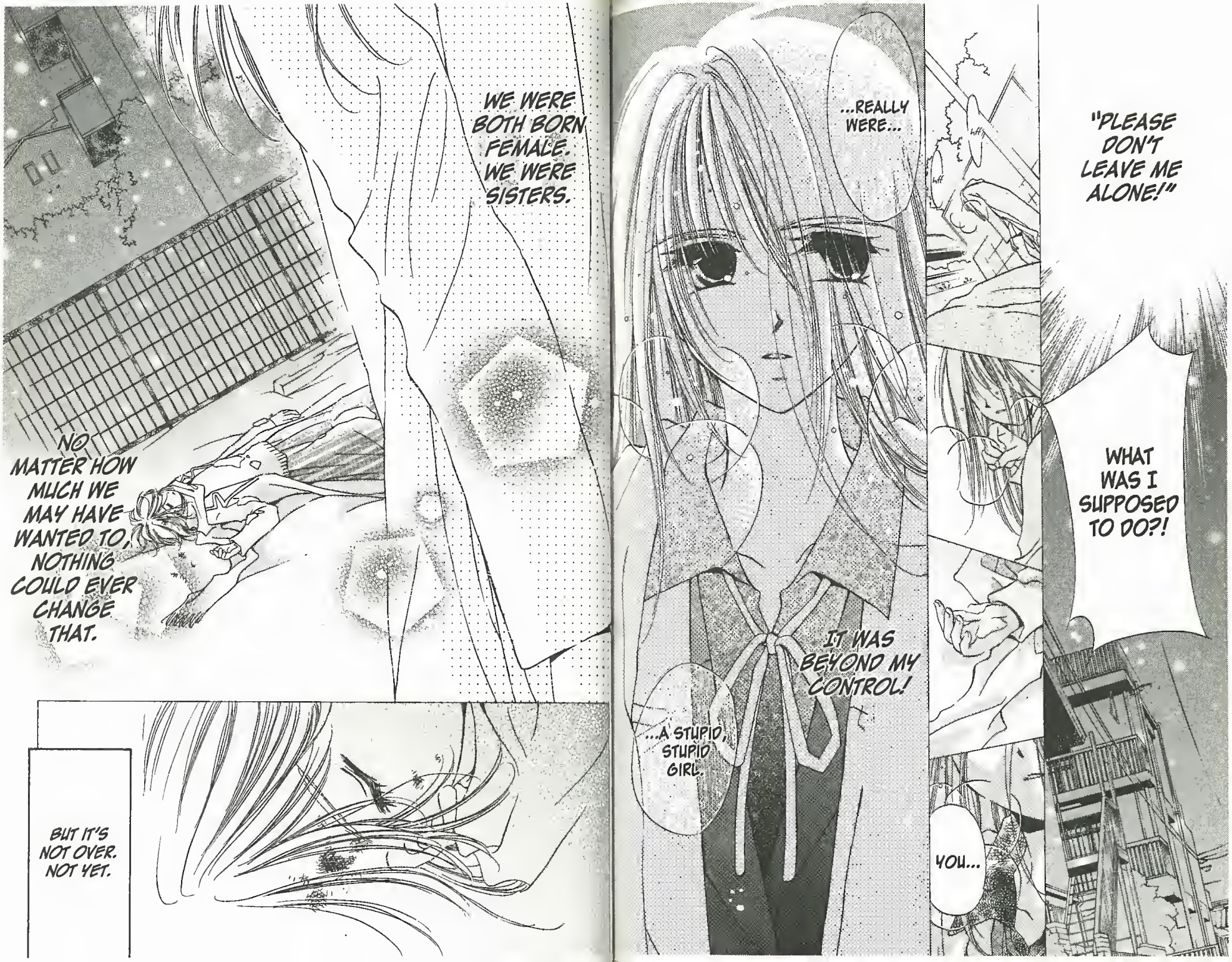
EXCEPT YOU AREN'T, ARE YOU?!
.....
SO WHY BOTHER SHOWING UP, JERKFACE?!
...I DON'T KNOW.
PFFT!
I DON'T KNOW IF I STILL LOVE KANAKO, OR IF I HATE HER, OR WHAT.
WHENEVER I THINK OF KANAKO...
...IT'S LIKE I'M TEETERING ON THE EDGE OF A DARK VOID THAT HAS NO END.
ARE YOU ASKING FOR MY PERMISSION?
BECAUSE I'M JUST SHOCKED YOU'RE EVEN HERE.
MAYBE I NEEDED TO HAVE MORE FAITH IN YOUR ABILITY TO GET OVER KANAKO.
YOU MIND, MOTOKO?
YURI IS YOUR BEST FRIEND, AFTER ALL.
HEY, KIDOO.
YABE-SENPAI!!
NO! I'M JUST GLAD YOU CAME!
SORRY, YURI.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO BE LATE.

YOU THINK YOU CAN DEAL WITH THAT?
I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT, YURI, I'M PRETTY SCREWED UP!
...SEN-PAI...!
LISTEN...
WE'LL BE FINE, AS LONG AS WE'RE TOGETHER.
YES!!!
I LOVE YOU, YABE !!!
YO, HIRAO.
TIME FOR A STRATEGIC RETREAT.
BRAIN-DEAD
THOSE TWO ARE LOST TO US FOR THE TIME BEING.

"...I promise!"
"I'll make you happy, Senpai..."
I DON'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO EVEN LOOK AT THAT OLD WOUND, LET ALONE TRY TO HEAL IT.
BY MYSELF, I'M A TOTALLY HOPELESS, WORTHLESS EXCUSE FOR A MAN.
BUT THERE IS A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.
...I'LL HAVE A REASON TO FINALLY REDEEM MYSELF, NO MATTER HOW LONG IT TAKES.
IT'S THE ONLY THING I SEE CLEARLY.
I KNOW, THOUGH, THAT WITH YURI BY MY SIDE...
I COULDN'T BEAR IT IF THAT LIGHT WENT OUT.


DAMMIT!
HOW MUCH OF A PAIN IN THE BUTT DOES SHE HAVE TO BE BEFORE SHE'S SATISFIED?!
"I...I'M SORRY..."
I'LL SMACK HER INTO NEXT WEEK ONCE I FIND HER!
"I'M SORRY...I'M SORRY."
...
"I'M SORRY!!"

BUT...
IT'S BEEN THREE HOURS!
THE SNOW HAD BEGUN AFTER LUNCH, AND IT HAD YET TO STOP.
"WHAT? KANAKO'S NOT HOME YET?"
Y-YES. MISS KANAKO SAID SHE WAS GOING TO GO GET YOU, AND THEN SHE JUST LEFT.
MISS MOTOKO!
THAT IDIOT!
I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT NOTHING... UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.
I love you, Senpai!
Um, you can stop crying now.
I'll never leave you, no matter what!

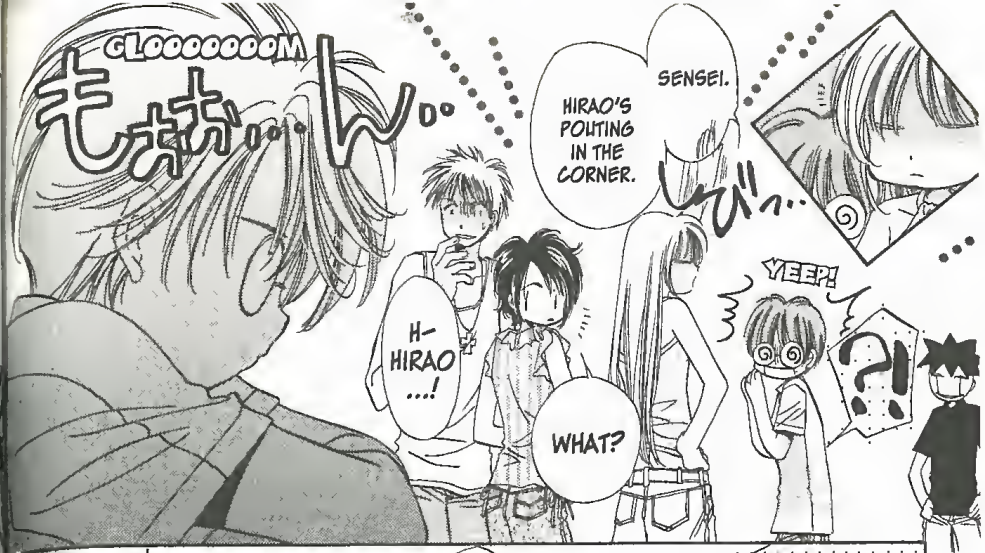

WE WERE BOTH BORN FEMALE. WE WERE SISTERS.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE MAY HAVE WANTED TO, NOTHING COULD EVER CHANGE THAT.
BUT IT'S NOT OVER. NOT YET.
...REALLY WERE...
IT WAS BEYOND MY CONTROL!
...A STUPID, STUPID GIRL.
"PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME ALONE!"
WHAT WAS I SUPPOSED TO DO?!
YOU...

P.S TACHIBANA TELLS IT LIKE IT IS

FINALLY! IT'S ABOUT TIME THIS BOOK STARTED TO RESEMBLE A PROPER ROMANTIC COMEDY.
HEH HEH HEH HEH
Took "just wing it" to a whole new level!
Gatcha Gacha 3
Happy he got to be the star for a chapter.
Tee hee hee
SENPAI, HOW CAN YOU THINK ABOUT CHANGING THE BOOK NOW THAT WE'RE FINALLY TOGETHER ?!
I THINK YOU COMPLETELY DROPPED THE "COMEDY" AND MOVED INTO "SERIOUS DRAMA" AT THE END.
EEEEE!
WHAT HAPPENED TO MY STARRING ROLE IN "GATCHA GACHA AND THE BLONDE SAMURAI"?
WHADDAYA THINK, GUYS?

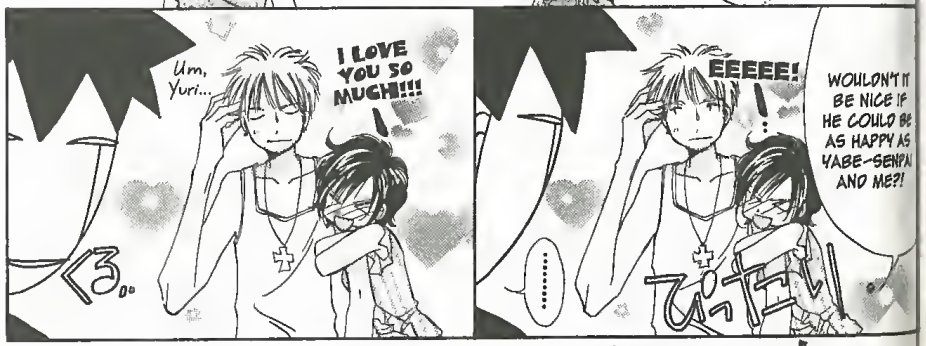
NOT BY A LONG SHOT.
"MUROI..."
I LOVE YOU.
I HAVE FOR A LONG TIME NOW.
"I NEED TO TELL YOU SOME-THING."
"STOP, FOR JUST A SECOND."
FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS, DO SOME-THING ABOUT HIM.
...a long, long time now...
ぼたぼた

EW, GROSS!! TAKE THAT BACK, SEKINE, RIGHT NOW!!
Who'd want some thing like that?
You want me to pulverize you?!
Kagura-zaka-san!
NOOOO!!! MY PURITY BELONGS TO KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN AND KAGURA-ZAKA-SAN ONLY!!
I don't remember why I was ever attracted to someone as stupid and pig-headed as Muroi. You're much more my type, Sekine.
Hirao-senpai! All of a sudden, I don't want to be near that violent, nasty Kagura-zaka-san. You're so much nicer!
THE "ROMANTIC COMEDY" BASE IS ALREADY THERE. IT WOULDN'T BE HARD AT ALL FOR ME TO ADD IN SOME SHONEN-AI.
カプーン


GLOOOOOOOM
もおおぉぉぉん
HIRAO'S POUTING IN THE CORNER.
SENSEI.
ひびぃ...
H-HIRAO...!
WHAT?
YEEP!
?!

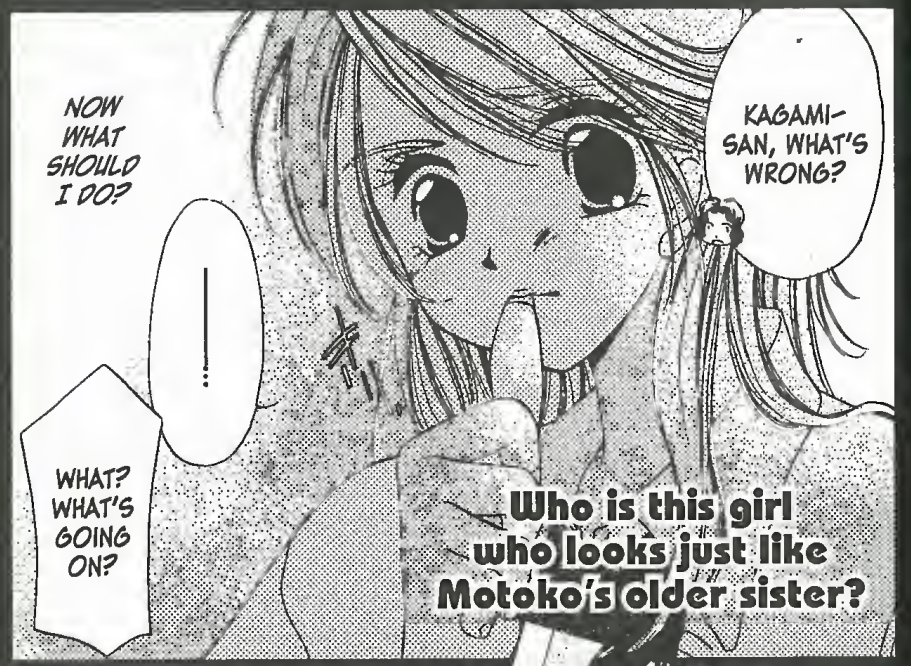
もおおないでぇぇん
GLOOOOOOOOOM
.....
Oh, yeah...
EVERY-BODY, JUST LEAVE HIM ALONE, ALL RIGHT?
WHAT'S WRONG W/ HIM?
HIRAO-SENPAI ?!

I have no idea why he's so depressed, but...
!!!
I MEAN, I DO OWE HIM AN AWFUL LOT.
I REALLY WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU DID SOMETHING NICE FOR HIRAO-SENPAI.
SERI-OUSLY...

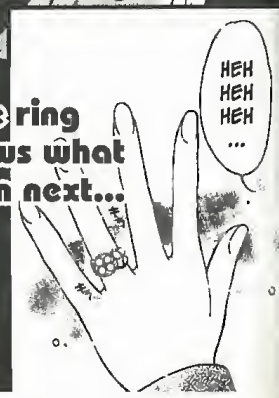

Um, Yuri...
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH!!!
<3
EEEEE!
WOULDN'T IT BE NICE IF HE COULD BE AS HAPPY AS YABE-SENPAI AND ME?!
.....
ぴっぴー!

NO. YOU DO SOME-THING.
DO SOMETHING TO HELP HIRAO-SENPAI. PLEASE!
WELL, BOYS... ER, "LIKE" YOU A LOT, RIGHT?
LIKE WHAT?
WHAT'S WITH THE SAD-PUPPY EYES?
ひょい。
STARE
...HN?

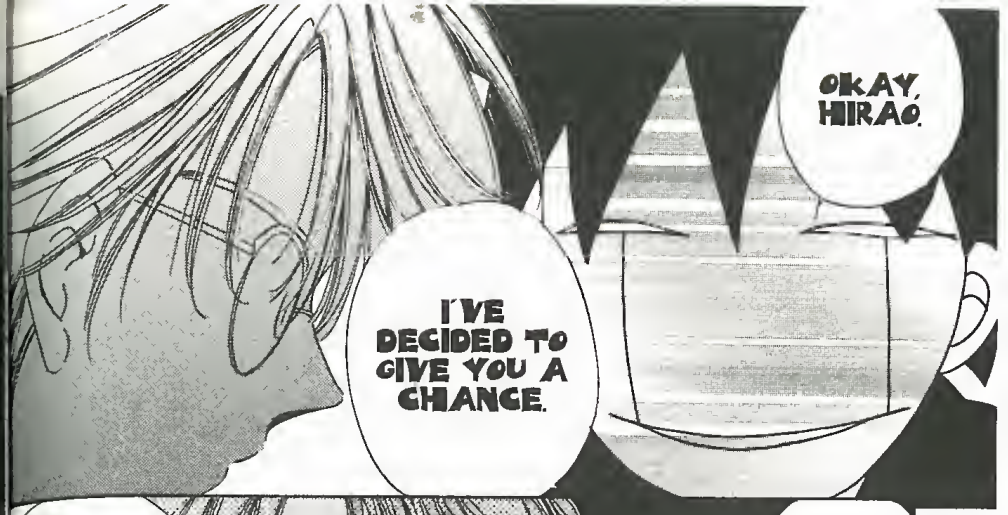
Stay tuned for Volume 4, coming soon!

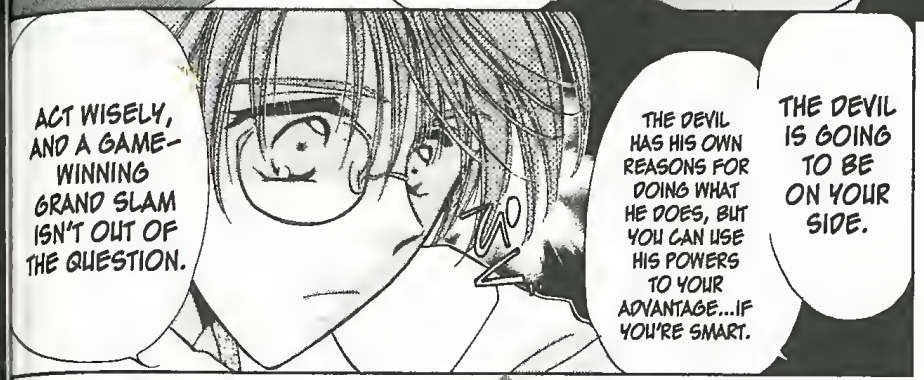


A new arrival shifts the delicate balance between the four friends.
DON'T SAY IT.
OH.
DO YOU EVEN HAVE THE RIGHT...
HAVE YOU SEEN YURI? I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR HER--
...TO ASK ME SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
...I, TOO...
M-MAYBE...
DON'T SAY IT!



Don't miss the fourth collection of Gatcha Gacha!




ACT WISELY, AND A GAME-WINNING GRAND SLAM ISN'T OUT OF THE QUESTION.
THE DEVIL HAS HIS OWN REASONS FOR DOING WHAT HE DOES, BUT YOU CAN USE HIS POWERS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE...IF YOU'RE SMART.
THE DEVIL IS GOING TO BE ON YOUR SIDE.

SEE YOU ALL AGAIN IN VOLUME 4!

This is going to get so much more screwed up. Prepare yourself!

P.S - Tachibana Tells It Like It Is / End

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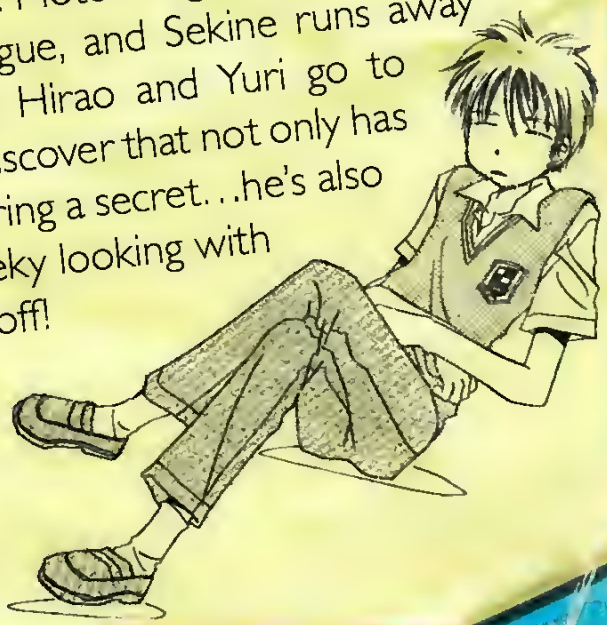
Gatcha Gacha™

Let the rumors begin! Hirao's slip at the end of our last volume has led to whispers in the school halls that he and Motoko are the next big item. Yuri is convinced, but resistance crops up from an unexpected quarter: Motoko's geeky lackey, Sekine! He and Motoko argue, and Sekine runs away in tears. But when Hirao and Yuri go to console him, they discover that not only has Sekine been harboring a secret...he's also not half so geeky looking with his glasses off!



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